

**FRIENDS** of the  
**CHILDREN**  
Colorado

# 2024–2025 Annual Report



**GENERATIONAL CHANGE, ONE CHILD AT A TIME**

## OUR MISSION

*Impacting generational change by empowering youth, who are facing the greatest obstacles, through relationships with professional mentors.*

**12+ YEARS, NO MATTER WHAT.**



## OUR MODEL

*We commit to each child and their caregivers for the long-term. 12+ years, no matter what. Each child is paired with a paid, professional mentor called a Friend. We also provide support to the parents or caregivers, giving a holistic approach to uplifting the entire family.*

## A Message From Our Executive Director



**At Friends of the Children, we know that any child can succeed – even those facing the most significant obstacles.**

That's why we pair children who face barriers with a paid, professional mentor, called a Friend, who walks alongside them for 12+ years. With long-term, one-on-one support, youth foster positive relationships, learn how to manage emotions, develop perseverance and grit, and so much more. Read on to learn more about the amazing impacts we've already seen in just three years, including for youth like Everly (pg. 5).

The children we work with are achieving amazing things in school, at home, and in the community. But there are many more youth in Colorado who need a Friend, including those who have experienced challenges like housing insecurity and interactions with the child welfare system. To reach those children, in 2025, Friends of the Children – Colorado Springs officially became Friends of the Children – Colorado. Our new name reflects the expansion of our program and deepening of our impact across our state.

In the coming year, we will enroll more youth and pair each of them with new professional mentors. That means more children in Colorado who face some of the most significant barriers will have the tools and support to find their spark, unlock their potential, and achieve their goals.

Our name has changed, our team is growing, and our footprint is expanding, but we remain steadfast in our mission to impact generational change by empowering youth through relationships with professional mentors. This work is only possible because of your support. Thank you for standing with us as we ensure more children in Colorado have a Friend by their side, no matter what.

With gratitude,



Heather Steinman

*Executive Director*

*Friends of the Children – Colorado*

# How Our Model Works



Our model is distinct, courageous, and proven.

We have redefined the youth mentoring field by creating the first and only long-term professional mentoring program in the country. Our Friends are experts in building sustained and nurturing relationships with youth. We specialize in working with youth who have faced a significant amount of adversity. We have the data to show that the model is real and it works. It was founded on research showing that the single most important factor in overcoming childhood adversity is a long-term, nurturing relationship with a consistent and caring adult.

Research over the past three decades continues to affirm how much these relationships matter. Our trauma-informed, long-term mentoring model is now being sought after by communities and systems around the country and the world. They recognize that children who've experienced a lot of adversity need more specialized and long-term mentoring relationships that Friends of the Children provides.

## The Generational Change Model

### ONE

We select children who could most benefit from a relationship with a long-term professional mentor.

### TWO

We hire and train full-time, professional mentors called Friends.

### THREE

We commit for the long term.

### FOUR

Our work is relationship-based, individualized and intentional.

### FIVE

We work with youth in school, at home and in the community.

### SIX

We evaluate, measure and improve.



## Our Core Assets

Friends of the Children has developed nine research-based Core Assets, which are specific qualities we focus on to ensure the social and emotional development of our youth. With our nine Core Assets in place, we believe our youth will enter adulthood with a solid foundation for future success.



### Growth Mindset

I love learning and know that my abilities will improve through dedication and effort.



### Belonging

I understand who I am, have a place where I feel accepted and know that my contributions count.



### Hope

When I have tough times, I believe it can get better.



### Problem Solving

I know how to weigh the pros and cons and make a decision.



### Perseverance & Grit

I work hard through challenges and finish what I start.



### Self Management

I know how to manage my feelings and take care of myself in a healthy way.



### Self Determination

I believe in myself and am able to set goals and achieve them



### Find Your Spark

I use creativity to explore my passions.



### Positive Relationship Building

I get along well with others and am able to find people to support me.



## Friends - Colorado

This year marked an exciting milestone for our organization as Friends – Colorado Springs officially became Friends of the Children – Colorado. Our new name reflects the growth of our program and the deepening of our impact across the state. With this transition, we expanded our reach by enrolling more youth and pairing each of them with a dedicated professional mentor, or Friend. This growth ensures that even more children in Colorado who face significant barriers have the support, encouragement, and long-term stability they need to discover their strengths, pursue their goals, and thrive.

While our name has changed, our mission remains unwavering—we continue to walk alongside our youth and their families for 12+ years. As we embark on this new chapter, community support remains essential to sustaining and expanding our work. This year, donors contributed through multiple avenues—from participating in the 2025 Give! Campaign, which doubled the impact through matching grants, committing to monthly giving, purchasing snacks, art supplies, and other in-kind gifts from our Amazon Wish List that help create warm, nurturing clubhouse environments. We are deeply grateful for everyone who stands with us and with Colorado's youth who face the greatest obstacles. With your partnership, more young people across our state now have a Friend by their side—no matter what.

# Meet Our Friends



## Carly Kowallis

I am passionate about being a Friend because I have the honor of seeing the impact a safe, consistent adult has on our kids' lives. Their worlds might be chaotic, but their Friend is always showing up, no matter what. I get to be a safe place to walk together with previous generations as they mold the next. It's rarely easy, but celebrating with them is made even sweeter when you know how hard the family or child has worked towards their goal. Collections of these impactful memories fuel my passion to see families more stable and confident in their abilities to take control of their futures.

## Tawnee Garcia

I am passionate about being a Friend because no other mentorship program allows for such a long-term commitment to youth. Being in it for the long-haul puts the emphasis on being there for the youth as a whole person. They have good days, bad days, sad days, crazy days, exciting days, and I get to be here for all of it. I get to meet them exactly where they're at. That's powerful!



## David Allen

I'm passionate about being a Friend because I believe in the power of love to change the trajectory of a child's life. Supporting children as they overcome personal struggles and build resilience brings me immense joy. Every child deserves to feel supported, guided, and empowered to achieve their goals, and it's an honor to be part of that journey for so many children and their families.



## Sarah Reynolds

I am passionate about being a Friend to my youth because I genuinely care about who they are as whole people, not just as students or participants in a program. I strive to be someone they can trust and have fun with as well as a steady presence who listens, laughs, and supports them without judgment. I recognize that many of them face challenges far beyond their years and I strive to respond with compassion, understanding, and genuine curiosity about their lives and individual experiences. My own life has shown me how profoundly words and presence can impact someone, and I am committed to being someone who uplifts, encourages and invests in them as the unique and complete individuals they are. It brings me a lot of joy helping them discover their strengths, build confidence and imagine a future filled with hope and possibility.



## Chuck Acker

I'm passionate about being a Friend because I know first-hand how one consistent, caring adult can change the entire trajectory of a young person's life. Showing up, believing in our kids, and helping them see possibilities they didn't know they had—that's the heart of this work for me. Every breakthrough, every small win, reminds me that this isn't just a job, it's a privilege.



## Kevin Barcoy

Being a Friend provides the opportunity to positively influence the lives of children who are at a time in life when encouragement and a vision of hope bring some joy to their daily lives. Providing mentorship to young people is a concrete way to change the trajectory of a life that possibly was headed in the wrong direction. As a mentor, I can help my little friends discover the talents and exceptional characteristics they already possess.



## Everly

Everly\* is a natural leader and caretaker. She makes friends easily and shows a remarkable gift for noticing when younger children need help. She is fascinated by dogs and can identify breeds with impressive accuracy, with hopes of having a pet to call her own one day. Everly is also an adventurous spirit who loves climbing, seeking out the biggest slides, and exploring nature.

Having a paid, professional mentor—called a Friend—by her side has given Everly the space and security to let these amazing qualities emerge and shine.

Everly's family story is complex. She never met her birth parents and was raised by her grandmother, who adopted both Everly and her older half-sister. Her grandmother has been diligent about connecting Everly with supportive resources, including Friends of the Children – Colorado.

Over the past three years, with help from her Friend, Everly has made tremendous progress. She is learning to name and express her feelings, and has started opening up about her emotions surrounding her family. Building trust with her Friend has helped Everly process challenging moments in a healthy way. Academically, Everly is making steady progress in reading and math, building a foundation that will serve her throughout her education.

With her natural empathy, curiosity, and determination—and a Friend walking beside her no matter what—Everly is becoming a confident young person with a bright future ahead.

*\*Youth name has been changed to protect privacy.*

# 2025 Milestones

## In April, we opened our new playground...

Friends of the Children – Colorado and the surrounding community celebrated a joyful milestone in April 2025 with the official ribbon cutting of the new playground, a project made possible through generous grants from the Moniker Foundation, the Gates Family Foundation, and Alpine Recreation, along with strong partnership and support from Colorado Springs School District 11. First imagined in 2023, the playground initiative grew from a simple idea into a vibrant, collaborative effort aimed at creating a safe, creative outdoor space for children and families. Thanks to the dedication of local partners and funders, the vision became a reality—one that will inspire play, connection, and community for years to come.



## ...spring was also planting time for our new garden



We celebrated the flourishing of our very first garden in the spring of 2025, a vibrant project made possible by a generous grant from the Whole Foods Kids Foundation received in late 2024. Through a meaningful partnership with Jack Swigert Middle School, the program was able to make use of the school's existing raised beds, transforming them into a colorful, thriving space filled with flowers, fruits, and vegetables. The garden has become a hands-on learning environment where children can explore how food grows, develop healthy eating habits, and experience the joy of nurturing something from seed to harvest. With such strong momentum and community support, Friends of the Children–Colorado looks forward to continuing and expanding the garden next year, creating even more opportunities for learning, growth, and connection.



# Who We Served

## School Districts



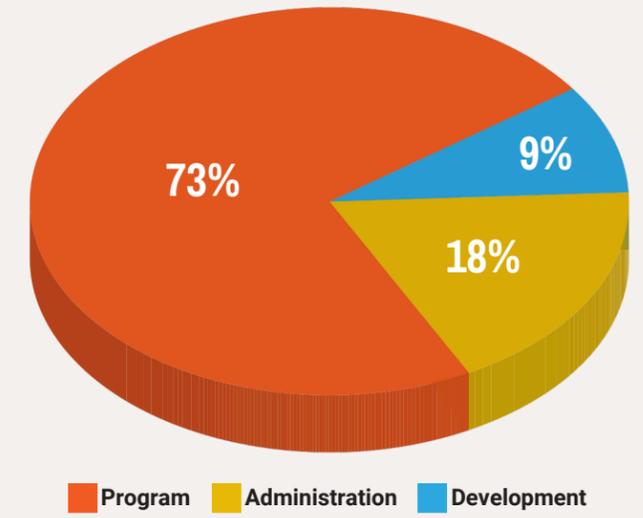
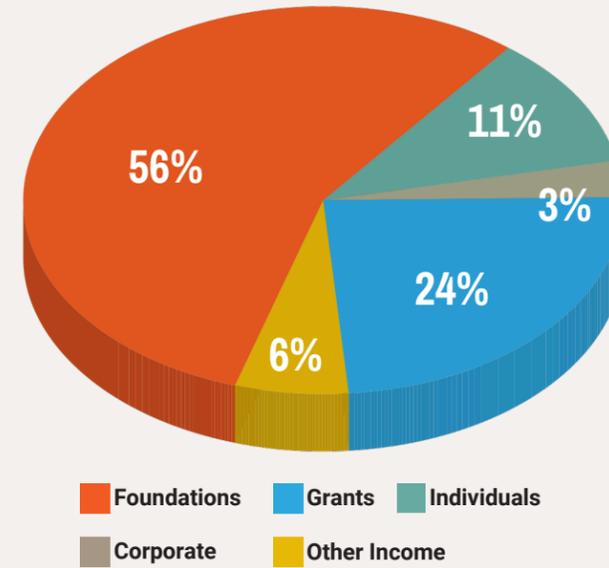
Area	District	Enrollment
Harrison	D-2	10 children
Widefield	D-3	6 children
Fountain-Fort Carson	D-8	1 child
Colorado Springs	D-11	2 children
Cheyenne Mountain	D-12	3 children
Academy	D-20	3 children
Falcon	D-49	1 child

## We connected families with many resources, including:

- Fitness or sports activities
- Basic Needs (e.g. clothing, cleaning supplies, eye glasses, furniture)
- Educational assistance (e.g. books for your home, tutoring, special education support or library access, school supplies)
- Cultural or art activities
- Childcare
- Routine check-ups (e.g., finding a doctor, helping me schedule an appointment, routine vaccines)
- Food assistance, programs (e.g. WIC, SNAP, food stamps)
- Mental health care (e.g. counseling, therapy sessions, or medication)
- Housing assistance (e.g. Section 8);
- Income and employment assistance (e.g. TANF, unemployment, finding or getting a job)



# Financial Report



\*A more diversified revenue pool with an increase in individual giving and grants. \$27K increase in revenue from last year (5% increase).

## Operating Revenue

Foundations	\$ 343,768
Individuals	\$ 113,083
Corporate	\$ 26,770
Grants	\$ 144,000
Other Income	\$ 54,136

## Operating Expense

Program	\$ 734,072
Development	\$ 91,899
Administration	\$ 180,168

Total Assets	\$ 739,860
Total Liabilities	\$ 96,147
Net Assets	\$ 146,014

TOTAL \$ 681,758

TOTAL \$ 1,006,139

FY 25 Revenue	\$ 681,758
FY 25 Expenditures	\$ 1,006,139

## Caregiver Demographics

- 55%** of caregivers are working full time.
- 38%** of families make less than \$20,000 per year.
- 80%** of children received public benefits.

## Caregiver Results

- 93%** of caregivers are satisfied with their Friends.
- 83%** find the program transformational for their child.
- 93%** feel like their Friend listens to them.



# Meet Our Board of Directors



**Mike Edwards**  
**Board Chair**  
 We asked Mike why he believes in Friends of the Children - Colorado and he told us that he serves on our Board of Directors because "Friends of the Children changes lives."



**Ian Glassford**  
 Why do you serve on the Friends of the Children - Colorado Board of Directors? "I have five kids and know what it means to have good mentorship and see positive outcomes and I think every kid should have that opportunity."



**Antonio Huerta**  
 I serve on the Friends of the Children Board because I've seen first-hand how their long-term, relationship-centered model changes lives. After working with them for years, I wanted to help strengthen their impact in Colorado Springs and support the possibility of expanding this life-changing work statewide.



**Jessica Kyle**  
 I joined the Board because I had a blessed childhood and I want to give back and be able to help with children who are not so lucky. Additionally, my son had trauma at 15 years old with the sudden loss of his father; however, my son was able to persevere because he had the love and support of a very involved and loving mother (me) and other adult, family members.



**Noreen Landis-Tyson**  
**Board Secretary**  
 I am thrilled to be on the Board because of the influence this organization is having on kids in Colorado. I know first-hand the positive impact that a mentor can have in life, especially so for a child being dealt a tough hand. The generational change this organization is capable of creating, will be a privilege to support and observe.



**Joe Schmidt**  
 I am excited to be a part of Friends because of the impact the program has on kids and the commitment of "no matter what." Their 12+ year model is the first of its kind in the country. I am very excited to be a part of that model.



**Kyle Smith**  
 I joined the Friends board because of the value the organization is having in Colorado Springs and it's expansion into Denver. Giving back to the community is a core element to the work that I do and I am grateful for the opportunity.



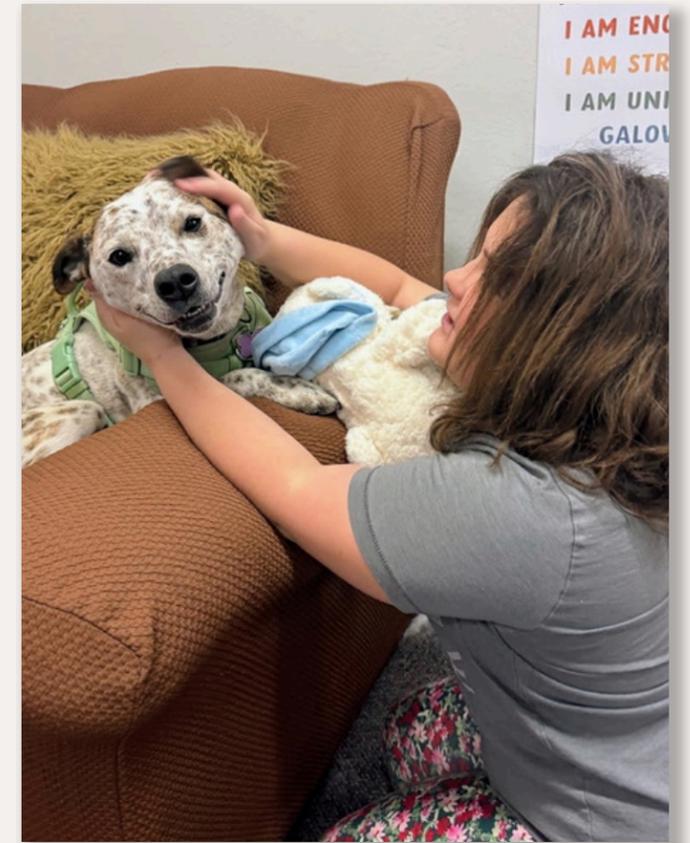
**Pam Snyder**  
**Board Treasurer**  
 I spent the last ten years of my career with CPCD—giving children a head start as Chief Financial Officer. Since my retirement I enjoy spending time gardening, hiking, camping, and time with my family (especially grandchildren). Friends of the Children mission is near and dear to my heart working with youth and making a difference in their lives.



**Cory Tweden**  
**Board Vice Chair**  
 Why do you believe in Friends of the Children? The mission for Friends is great but I also appreciate the way that each chapter is set up. Once you get the organization up and running in a community the growth, while not easy, is really pretty simple. Continue to raise awareness and money and add Friends.



**Debra Winn**  
 I was first introduced to Friends of the Children by National who explained the program's mission which immediately resonated with my passion and professional work. Months later, I was excited to support its inception, knowing the organization's guidance, mentorship, and long-term impact could be life-changing for hundreds of children in Colorado Springs.



# Our Professional Staff

- |                         |                              |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Heather Steinman</b> | <b>Executive Director</b>    |
| <b>Jess Lyons</b>       | <b>Chief Program Officer</b> |
| <b>Chuck Acker</b>      | <b>Friend</b>                |
| <b>David Allen</b>      | <b>Friend</b>                |
| <b>Kevin Barkocy</b>    | <b>Friend</b>                |
| <b>Tawnee Garcia</b>    | <b>Friend</b>                |
| <b>Carly Kowallis</b>   | <b>Friend</b>                |
| <b>Sarah Reynolds</b>   | <b>Friend</b>                |

## Founding Donors



The Dakota Foundation



e c h o  
f u n d



*“If you can help a child, you don’t have to spend years repairing an adult.”*

*– Frederick Douglas –*

GENERATIONAL CHANGE, ONE CHILD AT A TIME



# FR1ENDS of the CH1LDREN

Colorado

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