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**PRESCHOOL ON WHEELS REPORT
MARCH 2019**

BACKGROUND

In 2012, Aspen Community Foundation launched its Aspen to Parachute Cradle to Career Initiative to bring nonprofits, schools, government, businesses and philanthropy together to support the success of our region's 20,000 children ages 0-18. The goals of the Initiative were clear: to ensure that children were ready for kindergarten and that students graduated from high school ready for college and career. While the Collective Impact strategy of Cradle to Career was being implemented, several gaps had been identified that could be addressed immediately.

To fill the gap in access to early childhood education, the Preschool on Wheels program was developed by Aspen Community Foundation in partnership with the Garfield School District Re-2 to ensure that more children living in the towns of Rifle, Silt, and New Castle were entering kindergarten prepared to learn. Two school buses, retrofitted into state-of-the-art preschool classrooms, delivered low-cost, developmentally appropriate, literacy-based early education to three-, four-, and five-year-old children who would not have otherwise received these services and were at-risk for school failure.



Gus the Bus was launched in September 2012 in Rifle; the Sunshine Bus started in September 2013 in Silt and New Castle. Together these buses visit 12 low income, high need neighborhoods twice a week for two-three hours at a time and can serve up to 120 children annually. Each bus has two teachers, one of whom is bilingual. All teachers have commercial driver's licenses and drive the bus to each location.



Following the premise that a child's first and most important teacher is his or her parent, parent participation and engagement in the program has been critical to the success of the Preschools on Wheels program. The responsibilities of parents are outlined in a parent handbook and include ensuring their child's regular attendance, participating in annual home visits and the classroom each month, providing a nutritious snack for the child's class once a month, attending the monthly parenting classes, and attending all family events.

In April of 2015, the Preschool on Wheels program became licensed by the Colorado Office of Early Childhood, making it the first licensed mobile preschool in Colorado. The lengthy process had the unexpected outcome of the State deciding to add mobile preschools to their Rules Regulating School-Age Child Care Centers. The State formerly had no mobile preschool licensing classification, but after reviewing the Preschool on Wheels application, and to encourage replication of the model, the State modified its policy.



MISSION

The Preschool on Wheels program was designed to address several barriers that inhibit families from participating in licensed preschool programs.

- **Affordability** – The financial burden of early childhood education is well documented, consuming 30% or more of a low-income family's budget. Enrolling children in a quality preschool program is not an option for low-income families without some form of financial subsidy or assistance.
- **Capacity** – There was a lack of space in school district preschool programs and a severe shortage of private preschool options in the area. Prior to the Preschool on Wheels program, an estimated 150 students were not able to access preschool.

- Quality – Parents often rely on informal arrangements with family, friends and neighbors who might lack special training in child development and are not subject to safety and quality regulations. While these arrangements provided flexible childcare, they are often not focused on preparing children for kindergarten.
- Transportation – Access to quality preschool was greatly hindered by parents who could not get their children to a preschool location. These parents may not have had a vehicle or live close to a bus stop, or the preschool may not have been located near a public transit stop.



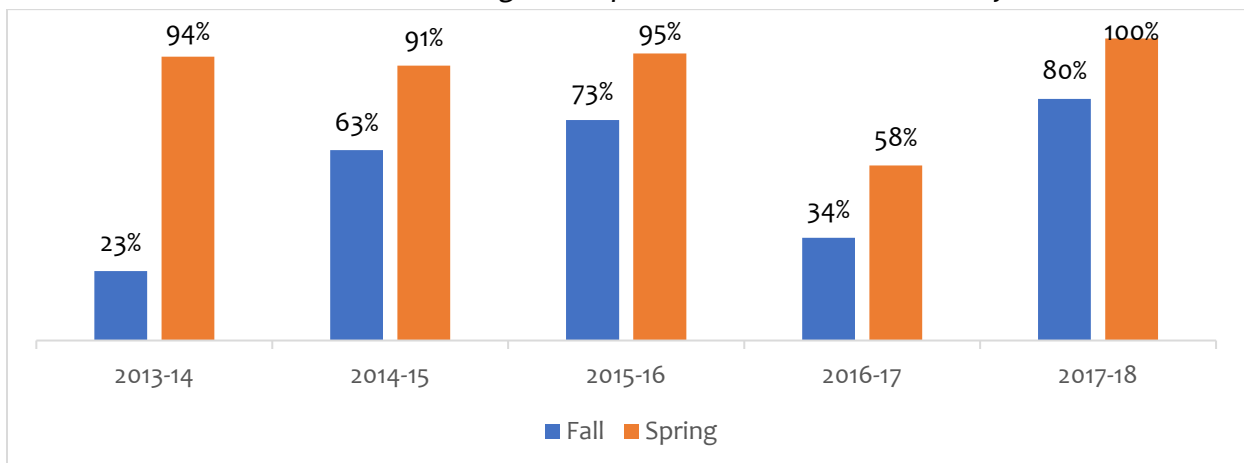
The Preschools on Wheels program addressed these challenges by providing low-cost, high-quality preschool directly to neighborhoods whose demographics had been identified by the Garfield School District Re-2 as having a higher percentage of underserved children. Enrollment priority is given to children who will be entering kindergarten the next fall, who are from low-income families (200% or less of the Federal Poverty Level), who are English language learners, whose families qualify under Free or Reduced-Price Lunch guidelines or who qualify for state-funded preschool but cannot be served due to capacity restrictions.



RESULTS

- 593 children have been served by the Preschool on Wheels program since 2012.
- Preschool on Wheels students have consistently demonstrated increases in developmental milestones that indicate kindergarten readiness. In particular, they show strong increases in literacy throughout the year. These gains are on par with children who participated in bricks and mortar preschool programs.
- When in kindergarten, Preschool on Wheels students demonstrate strong social-emotional skills and positive approaches to learning.
- A kindergarten teacher at an elementary school in Rifle commented, “I was so impressed with the Gus the Bus kinders who arrived on their first day of school so confident and able to write their first name which made me so happy!”
- Parent satisfaction surveys show consistent, positive results with 98% of parents “strongly agreeing” or “agreeing” that quality standards were being met.
- Parents repeatedly note their child’s increased academic and cognitive skills as well as their social-emotional growth.
 - “My child is more social, talkative, has a stronger vocabulary and is more confident.”
 - “My child shows me what he learns every day. I learn through him.”

Preschool on Wheels Students Meeting Developmental Milestones in Literacy



CLOSING THE GAP

Since the 2012 start of the program and simultaneous launch of the Aspen to Parachute Cradle to Career Initiative, efforts have focused on increasing the capacity and quality of licensed early childhood education programs throughout the region. This has included an emphasis on expanding access for low-income and at-risk children. This increase in capacity has impacted enrollment in Preschool on Wheels, prompting assessment of whether the program is still needed.

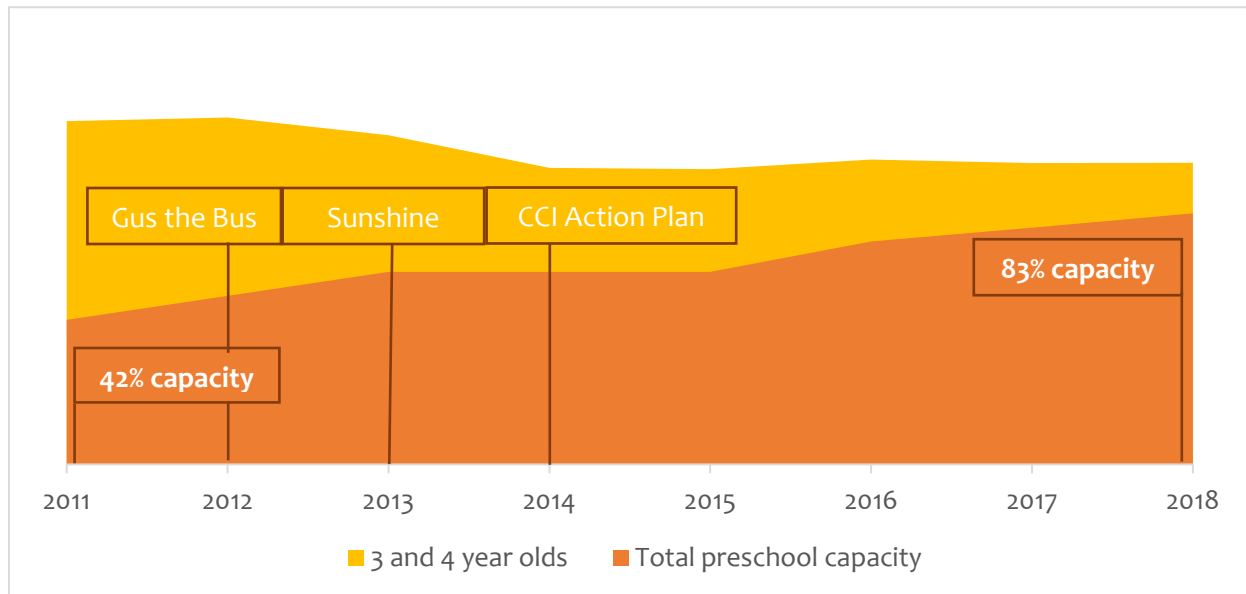


- The Garfield School District Re-2 has applied for grants to increase funding for early education. It was awarded funding from the Colorado Department of Education that allowed the district to open additional spaces for low-income children. With this expansion, the school district is serving more low-income, at-risk children, many of whom had historically been served by Preschool on Wheels.
- Prompted by market demand, private licensed childcare providers have opened or expanded in Rifle, Silt and New Castle.
- Home care providers have financial support to increase quality and/or space.
- In total, 146 additional preschool spaces have been created for children in Garfield School District Re-2 communities. Most of these spaces offer full-day care or flexible hours that better meet working family needs.
- Aspen Community Foundation's close partnership with the school district ensures that as many at-risk children as possible are served in district programs. This has meant that fewer of these children – who are the program's target population – are enrolled in the Preschool on Wheels program.
 - In the beginning, most Preschool on Wheels students were classified as low-income. Currently, only 56% of Preschool on Wheels students are low-income.
- Preschool on Wheels and other similar efforts have shined a spotlight on the importance of and increased the community investment in early childhood education.

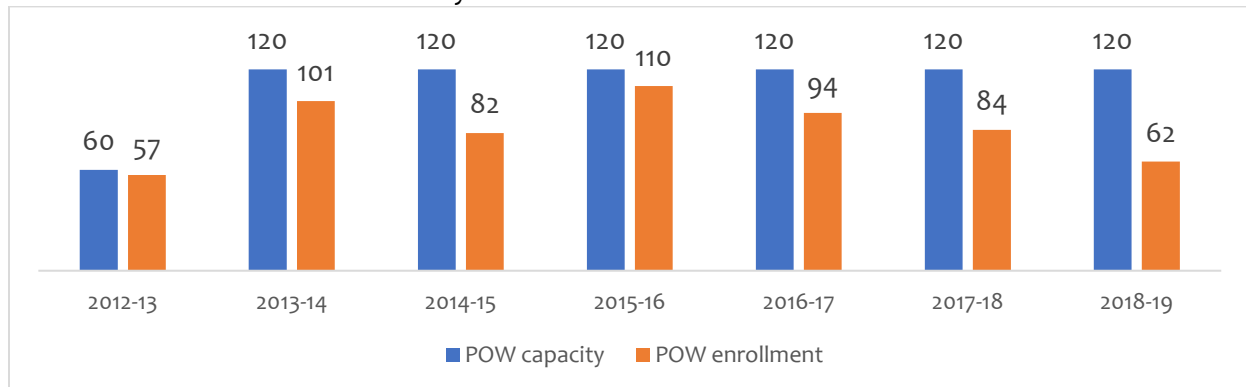
- State legislation is underway that will make it possible to generate tax funding for preschool and the new governor is advocating for full-day kindergarten funding in the State budget, which would free up school districts dollars for preschool.
- **The result: Nearly everyone in these communities who wants licensed preschool is now able to access it without Preschool on Wheels.**

Regional efforts that address affordability and quality will continue. The Rocky Mountain Preschool Coalition has been working on ways to develop sustainable funding for early childhood education to benefit low- and middle-income families as well as incentivize licensed programs to increase quality.

3 – and 4-Year-Olds and Preschool Capacity in Garfield School District Re-2



Preschool on Wheels Enrollment by Year



FUTURE OF THE BUSES

Aspen Community Foundation and Garfield School District Re-2 want to encourage replication of the mobile preschool model elsewhere in Colorado. The Preschool on Wheels buses and complete program toolkit will be made available to a rural community that is poised to take on this innovative model.

CONTINUED PARTNERSHIP

Since 1992, Aspen Community Foundation has supported Garfield School District Re-2, funding various projects including parent engagement, school quality improvement, cultural diversity, and literacy programs. Preschool on Wheels grew out of the original Gus the Bus outreach vehicle, which provided resources for parents and young children who were not attending preschool. Much of the need identified by the original Gus was addressed through Preschool on Wheels and, now, more permanently, through the expansion of preschools.



Through Cradle to Career, Aspen Community Foundation continues to partner with Garfield School District Re-2 by addressing the need for college and career counseling to help students chart a postsecondary educational pathway that will lead to financial independence. Additionally, working with the children and families through Preschool on Wheels has revealed other persistent needs in the community which are critical for kindergarten readiness. Aspen Community Foundation will continue to work with the school district and the communities to develop resources that focus on the whole family, an approach that research suggests will lead to even better outcomes for children.



PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT

For more than 15 years, Aspen Community Foundation has been committed to early childhood education. From launching an initiative to help preschools improve quality and establish tuition assistance programs to establishing a permanent charitable fund to support early education to the creation of the Preschool on Wheels program, Aspen Community Foundation has evolved its approach to meet the changing needs of young children and families. Since 2003, Aspen Community Foundation has invested more than \$6 million to improve the quality of and expand access to early childhood education and care programs that promote kindergarten readiness for our region's youngest children.

This investment includes approximately \$2.5 million to support the operations of the Preschool on Wheels program. This funding was used to purchase, retrofit, and maintain the buses, pay teacher and director salaries, and keep the classrooms up to date with curriculum and supplies. Approximately 200 donors, including individuals, foundations, and businesses have contributed to the program.

FOUNDERS CIRCLE

Aspen Skiing Company
Brenden Mann Foundation
CFP Foundation
Clough Family Foundation
Chevron North America
Columbine Ford
John Denver Aspenglow Fund at Aspen Community Foundation
Embrey Family Foundation
Katie and Ryan Mackley
Phyllis Hojel and Jake Mascotte
Jayne and Bill Poss
Rifle Community Foundation
Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation

INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES

Anonymous	Beatrice and Jeff Altman
Marcella Mascotte Abramowicz and Andrew Abramowicz	Casey, Brooke, Drew, Joan and Lawrence Altman
Pam Alexander	Jennifer and Thomas Amodio
Michelle Allmon	Gayle Morgan and Jonathan Armytage

Aspen Elementary School –
Kim Knol's 1st Grade Class
Bridget and Rick Balentine
Marcie Beattie
Peggy Scharlin Ben-Hamoo, Shlomo
Ben-Hamoo and Sara Ben-Hamoo
Jackie and Mike Bezos
Jonathan Birnkrant
Tamara Tormohlen and Marc Breslin
Denisse Bencomo and Gerardo Calles Vella
Eric Chase
Hayden Cleverly
Lisa and Stephen Cohen
LuLu Colby
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Robin and Dick Danell
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Gail and Al Engelberg
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Kathleen McGinniss-Feinzig and
Herbert Feinzig
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Arthur Greenberg
Ursula and Jason Gregg
Evelyn and James Harter
John Haskell Tutoring
Brigid and Brian Hazen

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Logan and Justin Hood
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Ellen and William Hunt
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Kendall and Douglas Knaus
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Hortencia Mercado and
Jose Ledezma
John Lee
Josefina Magana and Luis Magana Lemus
Suzanne Leydecker
Barbara and David Lipman
Susan and Fred Lodge
Scott London
Karen McDonald
Cindy and Michael McIntosh
Eleanor and Lowell Meyer
Laurie Michaels
Beth and Josh Mondry

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Marcie and Robert Musser
Nedra and Mark Oren
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Ruth Owens
Jessica and Matt Owings
Kathryn Penn
Korba Andrews and Briston Peterson
Carol Hood Peterson and Brooke Peterson
Dorothy and Aaron Podhurst
Joyce and Bill Poska
Terri and Sam Potter
Preschool on Wheels parents
Courtney and Tim Presutti
Sara and Ken Ransford
Katha Rossein and Ronald Razzore
Michelle Rexach
Adrian Rippy-Sheehy
Sonya and Marcos Rodriguez
Debbi Fields Rose and Michael Rose*
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Pamela and Arthur Sanders
Linda and Jay Sandrich
John Schenk
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Clare Evert-Shane and Steven Shane
Maureen and Carter Sharaf
Deborah Newman Sharpe and
 Robert Sharpe
Elizabeth Slossberg
Lorraine and Pat Spector
Silbi Stainton
Jennifer Stanke
Angie and Gary Stewart
Lou and Raymond Stover
Curt Strand
Catherine and Jonathan Tick

Emily Titera
Tom Triplate
Chris and Curt Ufkes
Nadine Asin and Thomas van Straaten
Dalia and Itzhak Vardy
ChiChi Villaloz
Lenny Weinglass
Shirley and Eric Williams

BUSINESS & GOVERNMENT

Alpine Bank - New Castle
Alpine Bank - Rifle Downtown
American Furniture Warehouse
American National Bank – Rifle
B & Y Drilling
Baldwin Associates
Bank of Colorado
Belmont Clean + Restore
Berthod Motors
Canyon Cleaners
Casey Trucking
Cheryl & Co. Real Estate
Choice Liquors
City Market Community Rewards
Coldwell Banker Mason Morse
Cottonwood Springs Mobile Home Park
Elmer Glass of Rifle
First Western Trust
Flatops Electric Inc.
Garfield Board of County Commissioners
Hansen Construction
Holy Cross Energy Round-Up Foundation
Integrated Community
Kum & Go Convenience Stores
Micro Solutions
Natural Soda
Town of New Castle

Pediatric Partners of Glenwood Springs
Preceptor Beta Kappa
Prime Painting
Rib City Grill
Rifle Insurance Agency/Jack Sours
Town of Silt
Swedish Painting Company
Talbot Enterprises
United Site Services
United Site Services Rifle Employees
Wells Fargo Community Relations
Western Rockies Federal Credit Union
Whole Foods Market Roaring Fork
William H. Baker Construction
WPX Energy
Xcel Energy Foundation

FOUNDATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS

Aspen Center for Integral Health
Aspen Country Day School
The Baguettes Fund at Aspen
Community Foundation
CBIS Foundation
Community Foundation of
Greater Des Moines
Denver Foundation
Early Learning Ventures
Fidelity Charitable
Mile High United Way
Patricia C. Moore Advised Fund at Aspen
Community Foundation
Pettit Foundation
Rifle Rotary Club

Tulsa Community Foundation
United Way Battlement to the Bells
Western Colorado Community Foundation

IN-KIND

City Market Cares
Drew Altman
Canyon Cleaners
Domino's Pizza
Early Learning Ventures
EZ-IT Computer Repair of Rifle
Garfield Re-2 School District
Lion's Club of New Castle
Little Caesars Pizza
Paradise Bakery
Poss Architecture
Rib City Grill

PARTNERS

Aspen-Parachute Dental Alliance
Colorado River Fire Rescue
CSU Extension 4-H/STEM
Colorado Mountain College – ESL
Cottonwood Springs Park
Colorado Parks and Wildlife /PSS
Citizen Telegram
Garfield County Public Health
Garfield County Public Libraries
Kid's Sight Colorado & Lion's Club
Raising A Reader
River Bridge Regional Center
Rifle, Silt & New Castle Law-
Enforcement Agencies

**deceased*