



Briefing Book November 2020

ASPEN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

We help individuals and families in the Aspen to Parachute region thrive!

ABOUT ACF

The Aspen to Parachute region is an amazing place to live. Incredible outdoor lifestyle, world-class arts and cultural experiences, safe neighborhoods, quality schools. No matter where you are in the region, you'll find friendly, welcoming faces, people working hard, raising families, contributing to the community. Yet, sadly, among us there are neighbors who are struggling. Struggling to make ends meet. Struggling with mental health and substance abuse issues. Struggling to ensure that their children have equal opportunities to thrive.



Founded in 1980, Aspen Community Foundation (ACF) has been helping those in our community who are struggling, ensuring that they have opportunities to live healthy, successful, and self-sufficient lives. We do this by connecting donors to community needs, building permanent charitable funds, and bringing people together to address the most pressing issues.

In 2010, when ACF was closing out its 30th anniversary, we asked ourselves some tough questions. Questions like, are we, as a community foundation that serves the diverse region from Aspen to Parachute, as effective as we can be? Are we, as the largest private funder in the region, making a significant difference? And are we, as an institution with deep knowledge and long-standing relationships in the community, *moving the needle*?

This led us to look more comprehensively at the persistent needs of our community, in particular at our children, ages 0-18. We commissioned an issue paper and found an alarming set of statistics that reflected poor performance on school readiness, academic proficiencies, high school graduation, and college enrollment. As a funder, we were aware of the numerous nonprofit organizations providing programs for these children and various school improvement efforts. Yet the disparity and gaps were still evident: many children were not getting off to a strong start, falling through the cracks, and unable to get on a pathway to a successful future.

While our nonprofits, schools, philanthropists, government, and businesses are working diligently, our challenges are too complex and far reaching for any single organization to fully address on its

own. Needle-moving change requires the engagement of all sectors working together toward the same goals, using data to drive decisions and policies, and continuous communication and collaboration among the partners. Recognizing that we were uniquely situated to coordinate a collective impact effort in our region, ACF stepped into the backbone role to provide facilitation, data collection and reporting, communications, and a myriad of other logistical and administrative supports needed to transform our community. This led to the launch of Cradle to Career in 2012.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Coordinated networks of nonprofits and agencies to work collectively toward common goals and common measures of success
- Engaged all four school districts in cross sector collaborations and shared measurement
- Engaged more than 250 businesses to advocate for early childhood education policies and offer more career exploration opportunities for youth
- Leveraged philanthropic dollars to increase government funding and partnership (City of Aspen, Garfield County, City of Glenwood Springs)
- Built trust with donors to fund emergent needs (Giving Network, Ultimate Ski Pass)
- Supported the creation of family resource centers in three school districts, providing safe, accessible places for families to connect with comprehensive services
- Founding partner of Roaring Fork PreCollegiate, an academic mentoring program that supports students who will be the first in their families to attend college
- Created and operated the Preschool on Wheels program for seven years, filling a critical gap in early childhood education and increasing the kindergarten readiness*
- Created the Post High School Success project, placing dedicated college and career counselors in all nine public high schools to ensure all students have access to postsecondary planning and support*
- Established the Healthcare Alliance Fund to develop affordable health insurance options for small business owners in the region*

(*More details about these projects are included in the What We Do section)

As ACF concludes its 40th year, we continue to ask ourselves how we can deepen our efforts to build a region of thriving children, supported and supportive families, and healthy communities. Through our Cradle to Career efforts, we've learned that we can make lasting change in our community. We've also learned that tackling deep-seated social issues like poverty and inequity is a long game. There is so much more to be done to address root causes and change systems so that everyone has opportunity and hope. ACF won't back down from this challenge and is eager to continue to support the success of the Aspen to Parachute region.

WHAT WE DO

In the 40 years since its founding, ACF has convened local organizations and leading stakeholders to identify regional needs and implement effective solutions using its relationships, institutional

knowledge, and grantmaking. With the COVID-19 crisis, ACF is leading community response efforts to help individuals and families impacted by the pandemic. This includes working with government, nonprofits, and schools to coordinate assistance and outreach, engaging donors to support needs, and disbursing funding to nonprofit organizations providing critical services.

CRADLE TO CAREER

Initiative launched in 2012

ACF studies the needs of children from 0 to 18, collects data, identifies the highest potential areas of impact and partners with nonprofits, schools, businesses, and government agencies to improve outcomes for children in the Aspen to Parachute region. **Our goal is to ensure that all young people are ready for kindergarten and graduate from high school ready for college and career.** When Cradle to Career began in 2012, only about half of kindergartners had a preschool experience, a key strategy for school readiness. With ACF's Preschool on Wheels project and other investments in early childhood education, that number is now over 80%. Similarly, in 2015, only half of high school seniors planned to attend a two- or-four- year college. ACF initiated the Post High School Success project, placing college and career counselors in all nine high schools, and now that number is over 70%. In 2019, \$788,000 was invested in seven Cradle to Career projects.

Preschool on Wheels - To fill the gap in access to early childhood education, the Preschool on Wheels (POW) 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.

Results

- 593 children have been served by the Preschool on Wheels program since 2012
- Preschool on Wheels students consistently demonstrated increases in developmental milestones that indicate kindergarten readiness, including literacy and language
- In kindergarten, Preschool on Wheels students demonstrated strong social-emotional skills and positive approaches to learning
- The POW program was discontinued in 2019 when nonprofit and schools created enough spaces for preschool students in our region

Post High School Success – Too many students in our region had a lack of understanding, guidance, and support both at home and at school to help them explore postsecondary options. And the schools themselves had limited resources available for helping every student develop a postsecondary plan. In short, there was a lack of a “culture of college,” something that educators told us was key to ensuring that students graduate from high school with a roadmap for their future. To address this “culture of college” gap, the Post High School Success project was created in 2015 by Aspen Community Foundation in partnership with our four school districts, Colorado Mountain

College, and local nonprofit organizations to provide college counseling, career exploration, financial aid advice, and accessible scholarships for students at all nine of our regional high schools.

Results

- All nine public high schools in the region now have dedicated college and career counselors.
- In addition to an increase in students planning to attend a two- or four-year college, there is more complete data on other postsecondary plans such as technical certification, workforce training, or military.
- To connect students to real-world experiences, several programs have been launched that provide job exploration, shadowing, and internship opportunities. (Community Connectors in Garfield 16, Youthentity's career development programs, the regional GlenX Career Expo)
- Programs were developed to help students who are at risk of dropping out of high school by offering credit recovery, concurrent enrollment and alternate pathways to graduation. (TREK Pathways in Garfield Re-2, Yampah Mountain High School career counseling)
- ACF partnered with the Colorado Department of Higher Education's Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative to increase scholarships for low-income students.

NONPROFIT SUPPORT

Program founded in 1980

Aspen Community Foundation has been supporting nonprofit organizations with general operating, program, and capacity building grants since its founding in 1980. These grants are made possible by annual contributions from donors including individuals and families, businesses, foundations, and donor advised funds. *In 2019, \$924,290 was awarded to 54 nonprofits and projects.*

Community Grantmaking - The Community Grantmaking program provides unrestricted grants that prioritizes nonprofits working in the areas of early childhood education, education and youth development, family support and essential human services.

Capacity Building - ACF provides funding and educational opportunities to strengthen the capacity of nonprofit organizations in our region.

Environment Foundation Partnership – ACF partners with Aspen Skiing Company's Environment Foundation to match Aspen Skiing Company employee contributions. Grants support nonprofits working on climate change and other environmental issues, conservation, renewable energy, smart growth, and sustainable agriculture.

Organization and Designated Funds – ACF holds funds on behalf of nonprofit organizations, providing assurance to their donors that funds earmarked for the future will be invested wisely and



used appropriately. ACF manages these funds as part of its investment portfolio and distributes payments to the organizations.

DIRECT ASSISTANCE

Program founded in 1991

Despite the perception of abundance, numerous people in the Aspen to Parachute region struggle to provide for themselves and their families. Many in our community are on the edge of financial hardship, often making decisions about which basic need they can afford, and they are often one unforeseen expense away from crisis. ACF provides funding to help individuals and families afford essential services, creating stability in their lives and the community. *In 2019, \$257,016 was disbursed to 249 people.*

Emergency Assistance and Gap Funds – These funds provide direct financial assistance to individuals and families experiencing hardship that prevents them from covering basic needs such as food, shelter, transportation, or medical or dental care.

Mental Health Fund – This fund provides financial assistance to individuals and families who are in need of mental health services but can't afford to pay the full cost of care.

Quality of Life Cancer Fund – This fund provides financial assistance to patients, survivors, families, and caregivers to help mitigate the hardship brought on by a cancer diagnosis.

Seniors Fund – This fund addresses quality of life issues affecting seniors. Individuals can receive support to improve their health and wellness, living environment, and to meet basic needs.

Valley Autism Assistance Fund – This fund provides monetary assistance to families living with Autism Spectrum Disorder that need additional support when dealing with the specialized and complex issues surrounding autism especially during an emergency or crisis.

FIELD OF INTEREST FUNDS

Program founded in 1991

Typically established by a donor as opposed to the foundation, field of interest funds support areas such as art, health, cultural diversity, or a special need. *In 2019, field of interest funds granted \$627,000 to individuals and organizations.*

Basalt Area Gives Fund – Established in 2020 as a result of a grassroots campaign that encouraged Basalt area residents to contribute their Town of Basalt property tax refunds to local nonprofit organizations.



Census 2020 Fund – Established in 2019 to provide a vehicle for local government contributions, this fund supports the Aspen to Parachute Complete Count Committee’s efforts to achieve a full and complete count of residents in the Roaring Fork and Colorado river valleys.

EBF Cultural Diversity Fund – Established in 2005 in honor of former ACF Executive Director Ellen Freedman, this fund supports organizations that are making a difference in embracing the ethnic and cultural diversity of our communities.

GlenX Career Expo Fund – Established in 2018, this fund supports two annual career fairs, connecting students to the business community for career exploration and providing opportunities for job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, and paid employment.

Healthcare Alliance Fund – Established in 2019 by Jake Mascotte and a group of donors to support the work of the Valley Health Alliance and other similar organizations to increase the quality and affordability of healthcare. (More detail can be found in the Dropbox folder)

McBride African Intern Fund – Established in 2014 by Laurie and John McBride to promote wildlife and conservation education for youth through annual two-week internships at Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in Kenya.

Normandy and World War II Education Fund – Established in 2016 by Paul D. Bushong, Jr., to promote understanding of the significance of Normandy and its place in World War II through an annual 12-day educational trip to New Orleans and France.

SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS

Program founded in 2006

Scholarships help students in need reach their postsecondary educational goals. ACF holds 12 funds that provide tuition assistance to graduating high school seniors and returning college students. These funds support students from diverse backgrounds with varying college and career paths, including first generation college attendees, low-income students, and those pursuing technical certification and apprenticeship training. *In 2019, scholarship funds granted \$319,000 to 103 students.*

DONOR ADVISED FUNDS

Program founded in 1997

ACF holds 123 donor advised funds and works with donors to help them achieve their philanthropic objectives. For example, ACF provides information and data on the needs of the region, vets nonprofits, assists with developing a donor’s philanthropic goals, and makes all grant disbursements. The total current assets of donor advised funds is \$15,998,230. *In 2019, donor advisors granted \$7,758,600 to nonprofits, with 65% of this funding benefiting the Aspen to Parachute region.*



CRISIS RESPONSE

Program founded in 1995

The devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina prompted ACF to establish a disaster philanthropy program to provide a vehicle for donors to support local, national, and international disasters. ACF's disaster philanthropy efforts in response to either environmental, economic, or social crises not only address the immediate relief and short-term recovery of disaster victims and impacted communities but also pays attention to long-term needs such as planning, preparedness, and mitigation.

Lake Christine Fire - The Lake Christine Fire in 2018 showed the generosity of our region and beyond; \$292,648 was contributed by 316 donors. These contributions were used to provide grocery cards, clothing, and other essential items to people who were evacuated from their homes, support mental health assessments and resource outreach in low-income neighborhoods, fund environmental restoration efforts and help underwrite mitigation and preparedness work by local fire departments.

COVID-19 Pandemic - So far in 2020, \$7,278,655 has been raised and \$5,103,515 has been granted to 40 organizations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This generosity is largely due to the creation of the 2020 Rescue Fund by Bob Hurst, Melony Lewis, and Jerry Greenwald. ACF also launched the COVID-19 Regional Response Fund, which has provided a vehicle for local governments and individuals to support pandemic response efforts. 276 donors have contributed to the two funds, of which 119 are new donors to ACF.

In addition to facilitating contributions from individuals, foundations, and government, ACF holds weekly convenings with nonprofits and government agencies from across the region to assess needs and disburse funding. The priority needs continue to be housing, food, mental health and support for children and families.