Growing Home

Transforming lives by nurturing children, strengthening families and creating community.
Growing Home's nineteenth year of service to children and families in Westminster, Adams County, and metro Denver was one of transition, change, and growth. It was a bittersweet year as familiar faces left, new friends arrived, and additional services were launched to better support children and families in need.

In August, Growing Home said goodbye to Teva Sienicki, Growing Home's President and CEO since 2002 who grew the organization from a staff of two to 30, implemented the vision of founder Kathleen Drozda, and expanded Growing Home's reach and program offerings. During this transition, Growing Home was led very capably by CFO/COO Anita Deshommes, who as interim CEO provided thoughtful, diligent, and compassionate leadership during a difficult time.

In late December, Karen Fox Elwell was appointed President and CEO, bringing to Growing Home extensive and broad experience in nonprofit programming with the vision to take Growing Home to the next level. Learn more about Karen from her bio on page 10.

Exciting additions to Growing Home's programs in 2017 included Seedlings and Collaborative Coaching, each an extension of our commitment to working alongside families and children to break the cycle of poverty. The Seedlings curriculum for new and expecting parents brings together knowledge about how the brain grows and changes starting at conception; how stress and adversity impact the brain, body, and behavior; new understanding about how adult brains change when people become moms and dads; research on effective parenting strategies; and ways to encourage long-term behavior changes. Collaborative Coaching, based upon research by Harvard University and Economic Mobility Pathways (formerly Crittenton Women's Union), focuses upon helping families move from scarcity to stability through a process of goal-setting in five key domains essential to long-term economic security. You will find more detailed information on these new programs in this report.

In 2017, we also saw our efforts in community organizing blossom. Community members are involved in efforts to improve housing, food justice, and K-12 education in Westminster. These dedicated community members are increasingly consulted by city and county officials for their views on current issues.

In 2018, with a new President and CEO in place, Growing Home looks forward to extensive strategic planning and preparation for future growth. A foundation for Growing Home's future was laid by the extraordinary bequest, in excess of one million dollars, left by Myrna Criswell in late 2016. Her generosity allows Growing Home to think expansively about the future, and we are so grateful for the opportunities her legacy permits.

As always, we thank each of you for your support in 2017, and indeed throughout the years, that has sustained us as we work alongside individuals in need to strengthen families, nurture children, and create community.

Sincerely,

Anita Deshommes    Keith Smith
CFO/COO, Interim CEO   Board Chair

We envision our community working together so that all children and their parents can have a place to call home, food on the table, and the opportunity to pursue their dreams.
Collaborative Coaching

“...families work together to set individual and family goals...”

In Collaborative Coaching, families work together to set individual and family goals, guided by a Family Support Specialist who helps families identify goals leading to self-sufficiency and action steps to reach those goals. Collaborative Coaching is a dual-generation intervention that engages all members of a family in setting goals that will move them to self-sufficiency and designing a path to achieve those goals. Collaborative Coaching also includes a child bridge with age-appropriate steps for children in the domains of health and well-being, social-emotional, self-regulation, preparing for independence, and educational progress. This element is key to breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty, as parents and children together learn critical skills for self-sufficiency, incorporate those skills into their daily lives, and support one another on their shared journey.

Growing Home chose to implement Collaborative Coaching as a way to shift from simply providing temporary “band-aid” assistance to working alongside families in poverty as they address the root causes of their situations and develop strategies for lasting, long-term change. Growing Home is the first organization in Colorado to offer Collaborative Coaching. Currently Growing Home has 26 families participating in Collaborative Coaching, and in just a few months these families have made considerable progress toward self-sufficiency, many working toward goals that center on improving job skills or obtaining additional education to advance their careers.

SUCCESS:

Lashawna and her family have been in Collaborative Coaching for almost nine months, meeting regularly with a Family Support Specialist to set goals and assess progress. In that time, Lashawna and her family have set and achieved goals related to financial management (developing and sticking with a budget, determining what level of income is needed to support her family) and education/training (Lashawna was recently accepted to the Corrections Academy). These achievements represent tangible progress toward Lashawna’s long-range goals of becoming a Corrections Officer and supporting her family without public assistance.

GROWING HOME transforms lives by nurturing children, strengthening families, and creating community.

In 2017 Growing Home served 13,939 individuals from 6,321 families, including 5,526 children.

| MEALS: | 155,529 Meals provided through the Food Pantry for the holidays | 1,142 families (representing 5,049 unduplicated individuals, 3,048 of whom were children) made a total of 3,533 visits to the Food Pantry in 2017 |
| INFANTS: | 17,484 Diapers and wipes were distributed to families |
| PARENTS AS TEACHERS: | 5,000 PAT home visitors made over 5,000 home visits to 413 families. |
| HOLIDAYS: | 633 Families received Thanksgiving baskets, holiday toys, or were adopted for the holidays |
| HOUSING: | 72 Families remaining stably housed through assistance with rent, mortgage, or utilities |
| SCHOOL SUPPLIES: | 1,052 Children received free backpacks and age-appropriate school supplies through Growing Home’s backpack drive |
| COLLABORATIVE COACHING: | 47 Families consisting of 78 individuals were part of Growing Home’s first Mobility Mentoring cohort |
| COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: | 75 Community members engaged in educational workshops or community actions |
YEAR IN REVIEW

Without our programs we wouldn’t be able to fulfill our mission to guide children and their families on the path to a brighter future. Through these key touchpoints, we have proven that we can make a difference, one parent, one child, or one family at a time.

Canopy

This year Growing Home’s Canopy temporary housing program for families and children provided up to three months of housing to 72 individuals (including 40 children) from 18 different families. Throughout 2017, kind-hearted volunteer’s helped families experiencing homelessness restore a measure of normalcy to their lives by sharing meals and simply being in community with families during their stay in Canopy. This level of social engagement and acceptance is vital for homeless families and is one of the keys to this program’s success rate. Of the families that stayed in Canopy this year, 72% moved from the Canopy program to stable permanent housing and remained stably housed for at least three months.

Seedlings

2017 was a year of tremendous growth for Growing Home’s Seedlings curriculum, as funding from Impact 100 Metro Denver and the Colorado Health Foundation allowed Growing Home to continue piloting this innovative learning experience for new and expectant parents. The Seedlings curriculum is built on a foundation of behavioral science and neuroscience, and provides parents with information they need to identify potential risks to their child due to toxic stress, along with tools and skills to buffer this stress and prevent long-term damage. Seedlings co-creator Dr. Sarah Watamura of the University of Denver is currently conducting a rigorous evaluation of Seedlings classes to document the impact this curriculum has on helping families and children break the cycle of poverty.

This year Growing Home offered one Seedlings series serving 12 parents. Classes were offered in English and Spanish and included family meals and child care to reduce barriers to participation. Seedlings facilitators noted very high levels of attendance and engagement, evidenced by the fact that all but one original participant successfully completed the series by attending at least 80% of classes. Families reported learning a great deal and sharing their new knowledge with friends and family outside the class. Facilitators also witnessed the creation of community between families, which has continued beyond the class. In addition, many of the families expressed either interest or intent to participate in Incredible Years parenting classes taught by Growing Home.

SUCCESS: Three month old Noah was already living in an environment that was having a negative impact on his development. His mother Sofia had to leave a difficult marriage and took her children to a shelter. Noah didn’t have his own nursery with toys to play with or mobiles hanging over his crib. His siblings didn’t have a table to do their homework at, and homework didn’t seem that important anyway. Noah’s mother had more pressing issues: where they would stay next? Would it be safe? How was she going to feed the family? As a result, Noah was often left alone in his crib or carrier when he should have been practicing crawling and developing language. He was not babbling like a baby should, and often lay quietly, staring around the room. Sofia was worried about paying rent and utilities, putting food on the table, and working multiple jobs. Then Sofia came to Growing Home.

Sofia came to Growing Home’s Food Pantry for extra assistance and learned about Seedlings, Growing Home’s classes for new parents. Here she learned about different parenting philosophies and child development phases and realized that Noah, now six months old, was not meeting important developmental milestones. Seedlings also gave her the tools to cope with special circumstances that many of us never face, like immigration, abuse, and poverty. Most importantly, Growing Home created space and opportunity for Sofia to learn and to advocate for herself and her children. After Seedlings, Sofia signed up for Growing Home’s award-winning Parents as Teachers program. She and Noah now receive regular home visits from their Parent Educator, and her family is on the road to a stable life.

SUCCESS:

It’s hard to get back on your feet when you don’t have the support of your family, your friends are coping with their own difficulties, and the system shuns you because you’re undocumented. Martha’s marriage of 16 years involved constant emotional attacks by her husband, and she was estranged from the rest of her family. When her husband was deported, Martha followed in an attempt to save the marriage. But the abuse continued, and for the sake of her children Martha left her husband and returned to the United States, temporarily living with relatives.

However, these temporary arrangements didn’t last, and Martha had to leave so she sought help at Growing Home. For the first time, she had to provide for her children alone. When she walked into Growing Home the first time she was afraid, but she found acceptance and caring. She couldn’t believe how kindhearted the Canopy volunteers were to her and her family. Martha was able to get her own car, and reunited with her oldest son when he returned from Mexico. During her time at Growing Home, Martha was able to receive medical and dental care, and began to mentor Blanca, another Canopy resident. Martha was finally able to save up enough money to secure stable housing and found a place of her own to call home. Martha defined the odds and has become both economically and emotionally stable enough to provide a better future for herself and for her children.
Parents as Teachers

This year Growing Home’s PAT team provided training to 434 adult caregivers in 364 families through conducting over 5,000 home visits, plus monthly Discovery Time sessions for parents and children to come together and learn while building social capital.

Each year Growing Home’s Parents as Teachers program is evaluated by Parent Possible to measure the impact of this program. This year’s evaluation revealed that 93% of participating parents exhibited average or above average developmentally appropriate behavior with their children across all domains (affection, responsiveness, encouragement, and teaching); 61% of parents exhibited above average behaviors in these domains. Parents reported their strongest protective factor was in the area of nurturing and attachment, and also reported reading or looking at books with their child 3-4 times per week. Children in PAT demonstrated statistically significant increases in school readiness scores in the areas of colors, numbers/counting, and shapes.

Food Pantry

The Food Pantry is the way most families engage with Growing Home’s services. Many families who are not familiar with Growing Home’s services visit the food pantry in search of other assistance, such as temporary housing or homelessness prevention through rental or mortgage assistance. At their first visit to the food pantry each family participates in an intake interview with a Family Support Specialist or trained volunteer to identify additional needs or barriers to self-sufficiency and locate resources to address those needs and barriers.

In 2017, Growing Home implemented a new tracking method to better measure food pantry usage, as well as diaper distribution. Through this new method, Growing Home documented serving 5,049 unduplicated individuals (including 3,048 unduplicated children) from 1,142 unduplicated families as they made a total of 3,533 visits to the food pantry. During these visits they obtained food to prepare 155,529 meals (plus snacks). In addition, 617 unduplicated families with children in diapers received a total of 17,484 diapers, plus wipes. This new knowledge has helped Growing Home more accurately project its needs for 2018, and has also allowed for more detailed reporting to funders and donors.

Growing Home’s food pantry got a much-needed upgrade in September thanks to the kind volunteers from Lideres de Transformación V.42, a local community service group, offered to perform a service Project at Growing Home. They raised $8,000 for Growing Home and used these funds to install new flooring in the Food Pantry, purchase eight mattresses to replace aging bedding in the Canopy Program, and create a dazzling play area at the Day Center.

This year’s evaluation revealed that 93% of participating parents exhibited average or above average developmentally appropriate behavior with their children across all domains (affection, responsiveness, encouragement, and teaching); 61% of parents exhibited above average behaviors in these domains. Parents reported their strongest protective factor was in the area of nurturing and attachment, and also reported reading or looking at books with their child 3-4 times per week. Children in PAT demonstrated statistically significant increases in school readiness scores in the areas of colors, numbers/counting, and shapes.

Community Organizing

In 2017, Growing Home’s Community Organizer worked tirelessly to support the dedicated members of Comunidad Unidad y Apoyo (Community, Unity, and Support) as they addressed some of the issues that form barriers to family self-sufficiency and impact the families Growing Home serves. This group of 25 neighborhood leaders has organized themselves into a formal group with defined leadership roles of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Public Relations Officer. This group has also established separate sub-committees to address the top concerns of community members. Growing Home is proud to walk alongside these dedicated leaders as they exercise their shared power to improve living conditions for all members of their community.

Thanks to a partnership with Hyland Hills Parks and Recreation District, Growing Home expanded its community gardening in 2017 by adding two garden plots donated for use by Growing Home’s community. These plots were lovingly tended by community members and Growing Home’s Community Organizer, and families reaped the reward of fresh produce all summer. The gardens also became a natural gathering place for families to connect, strength- en relationships, and build social capital while they gained new skills.

Bev Bishop volunteers in the Food Pantry several days a week and, along with her partner, Jim Towle, does frequent food pickups as well. Bev serves on Growing Home’s Sustainable Funding Committee as Ambassador Manager. In this role, Bev is constantly advocating for Growing Home with her fellow volunteers, friends, and neighbors to inspire people to serve as Ambassadors – tour hosts who will organize a tour here at Growing Home, in their homes, at their offices, or at another venue. Finally, Bev has joined Growing Home’s Board of Directors and serves as Secretary to the Board.

She is a generous supporter of Growing Home, a member of the Building Homes Society and the Criswell Planned Giving Society (having included Growing Home in her estate planning).

Said Bev, “I just wanted to do something productive with my time once I retired - something in my community, to help other people, and something that involved contact with people. No two days are the same here at Growing Home, there’s always a new event, program, or group of people who make volunteering fun and engaging for me. I really enjoy meeting other volunteers, families, staff – people with whom I otherwise wouldn’t have ever met. All because of Growing Home. As a retiree, I think it’s very important to find something you enjoy doing but also gives you the sense that you’re contributing to the betterment of your community. And it’s more fun than a real job!”

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

She’s a whirling dervish. Not only does Bev Bishop wear a number of hats at Growing Home, but she’s also an activist, supporting social and political causes to make her community a better place to live for all of us.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

She’s a whirling dervish. Not only does Bev Bishop wear a number of hats at Growing Home, but she’s also an activist, supporting social and political causes to make her community a better place to live for all of us.
STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Growing Home’s Board of Directors has appointed Karen Fox Elwell as its new CEO. Karen replaces the previous CEO, who left in August of 2017.

Karen is a licensed social worker with a Bachelor of Arts in Child Development from Tufts University and a Masters in Social Work and Masters in Business Administration from the University of Denver. Karen has more than sixteen years of experience working with diverse populations to equip them with vital skills for future success. Karen began her career facilitating youth development programs in Massachusetts and then in Paraguay as a Peace Corps volunteer. During her Peace Corps service, she established the first public library in her community and became fluent in Spanish.

Over the past eight years, Karen has honed her management and leadership skills while serving in senior leadership roles at Mi Casa Resource Center. As Mi Casa’s Director of Youth & Family Development, she significantly increased the organization’s impact on young people and their families by doubling the resources and staff of the department. As Mi Casa’s Vice President of Programs & Integration, Karen led the organization’s efforts to implement a holistic, integrated service delivery model that helps low-income entrepreneurs and job seekers advance their economic success and ultimately break the cycle of poverty. Under her leadership, Mi Casa became a nationally recognized leader in youth & family development, career development, and small business development.

Board Chair Keith Smith said, “We welcome Karen and are thrilled to have her join the Growing Home Family. Karen’s leadership and experience will help Growing Home continue to thrive, serve our families, and help us grow to the next level.”

Karen is excited to get started and said, “I am looking forward to working with Growing Home’s Board of Directors and staff to build upon the strong foundation and lead the organization through its next chapter. I look forward to leading the organization in delivering impactful programs that improve the lives of children and families as well as advocating for systemic change to address the root causes of poverty. My goal is to make Growing Home a model organization that others will want to emulate.”

Karen may be contacted at karen@growinghome.org.
In last year’s annual report Growing Home told the story of Myrna Criswell’s extraordinary bequest, fully realized in 2017. Before she became ill, Myrna was an enthusiastic supporter of Growing Home and its programs, helping us improve in a number of ways. She directed Growing Home to use the money as it saw fit. Myrna’s gift has enabled Growing Home to establish a substantial reserve account to help secure Growing Home’s future.

Growing Home’s Criswell Planned Giving Society has three living members – former Board member Jim Braun, current Board member Bev Bishop, and volunteer Lynn Harrington. Each of these loyal supporters intends to fund their gift in a different way – through a bequest, through proceeds from a life insurance policy, and through a 401K.

In 2018, Growing Home will celebrate its twentieth year of operation. Serving more and more families each year, Growing Home has established itself as an essential part of the south Westminster community. We are grateful for our supporters who want to see Growing Home sustain its role in creating a brighter future for the families we serve.

Interested in finding out more about how you can join the Criswell Planned Giving Society? Please contact Chief Development Officer Pell Fender at pell@growinghome.org or 720-407-1986.

IN REMEMBRANCE: BRIAN SMITH

Brian Smith passed away in late December 2017. Brian and his wife, Colleen, have long been friends and generous supporters of Growing Home. Brian served on the Board of Directors from 2012-13 and chaired the Finance Committee. His death was unexpected and a shock to family and friends.

Said CFO and COO Anita Deshommes, “Brian was very sharp; he brought some much-needed discipline and infrastructure to Growing Home’s financial management. He was also funny and what we call a ‘heart’ person. He found the stories of the families Growing Home serves very moving.”

His friends saw him in the same light. Said one, “Brian was one of those people that you just fell in love with right away. His smile was contagious, his guitar playing enjoyable, his love for Colleen and his family undeniable, and his friendship meaningful.”

Said another, “He had no problem dancing like nobody was watching, and even if they were, he wouldn’t care as long as he was enjoying life and making Colleen smile.”

Building Homes Society

In 2018, Growing Home will celebrate its twentieth year of operation. Serving more and more families each year, Growing Home has established itself as an essential part of the south Westminster community. We are grateful for our supporters who want to see Growing Home sustain its role in creating a brighter future for the families we serve.

Interested in finding out more about how you can join the Criswell Planned Giving Society? Please contact Chief Development Officer Pell Fender at pell@growinghome.org or 720-407-1986.

IN REMEMBRANCE: BRIAN SMITH

Brian Smith passed away in late December 2017. Brian and his wife, Colleen, have long been friends and generous supporters of Growing Home. Brian served on the Board of Directors from 2012-13 and chaired the Finance Committee. His death was unexpected and a shock to family and friends.

Said CFO and COO Anita Deshommes, “Brian was very sharp; he brought some much-needed discipline and infrastructure to Growing Home’s financial management. He was also funny and what we call a ‘heart’ person. He found the stories of the families Growing Home serves very moving.”

His friends saw him in the same light. Said one, “Brian was one of those people that you just fell in love with right away. His smile was contagious, his guitar playing enjoyable, his love for Colleen and his family undeniable, and his friendship meaningful.”

Said another, “He had no problem dancing like nobody was watching, and even if they were, he wouldn’t care as long as he was enjoying life and making Colleen smile.”

Building Homes Society

In 2018, Growing Home will celebrate its twentieth year of operation. Serving more and more families each year, Growing Home has established itself as an essential part of the south Westminster community. We are grateful for our supporters who want to see Growing Home sustain its role in creating a brighter future for the families we serve.

Interested in finding out more about how you can join the Criswell Planned Giving Society? Please contact Chief Development Officer Pell Fender at pell@growinghome.org or 720-407-1986.

IN REMEMBRANCE: BRIAN SMITH

Brian Smith passed away in late December 2017. Brian and his wife, Colleen, have long been friends and generous supporters of Growing Home. Brian served on the Board of Directors from 2012-13 and chaired the Finance Committee. His death was unexpected and a shock to family and friends.

Said CFO and COO Anita Deshommes, “Brian was very sharp; he brought some much-needed discipline and infrastructure to Growing Home’s financial management. He was also funny and what we call a ‘heart’ person. He found the stories of the families Growing Home serves very moving.”

His friends saw him in the same light. Said one, “Brian was one of those people that you just fell in love with right away. His smile was contagious, his guitar playing enjoyable, his love for Colleen and his family undeniable, and his friendship meaningful.”

Said another, “He had no problem dancing like nobody was watching, and even if they were, he wouldn’t care as long as he was enjoying life and making Colleen smile.”

Building Homes Society

In 2018, Growing Home will celebrate its twentieth year of operation. Serving more and more families each year, Growing Home has established itself as an essential part of the south Westminster community. We are grateful for our supporters who want to see Growing Home sustain its role in creating a brighter future for the families we serve.

Interested in finding out more about how you can join the Criswell Planned Giving Society? Please contact Chief Development Officer Pell Fender at pell@growinghome.org or 720-407-1986.

IN REMEMBRANCE: BRIAN SMITH

Brian Smith passed away in late December 2017. Brian and his wife, Colleen, have long been friends and generous supporters of Growing Home. Brian served on the Board of Directors from 2012-13 and chaired the Finance Committee. His death was unexpected and a shock to family and friends.

Said CFO and COO Anita Deshommes, “Brian was very sharp; he brought some much-needed discipline and infrastructure to Growing Home’s financial management. He was also funny and what we call a ‘heart’ person. He found the stories of the families Growing Home serves very moving.”

His friends saw him in the same light. Said one, “Brian was one of those people that you just fell in love with right away. His smile was contagious, his guitar playing enjoyable, his love for Colleen and his family undeniable, and his friendship meaningful.”

Said another, “He had no problem dancing like nobody was watching, and even if they were, he wouldn’t care as long as he was enjoying life and making Colleen smile.”

Building Homes Society

In 2018, Growing Home will celebrate its twentieth year of operation. Serving more and more families each year, Growing Home has established itself as an essential part of the south Westminster community. We are grateful for our supporters who want to see Growing Home sustain its role in creating a brighter future for the families we serve.

Interested in finding out more about how you can join the Criswell Planned Giving Society? Please contact Chief Development Officer Pell Fender at pell@growinghome.org or 720-407-1986.

IN REMEMBRANCE: BRIAN SMITH

Brian Smith passed away in late December 2017. Brian and his wife, Colleen, have long been friends and generous supporters of Growing Home. Brian served on the Board of Directors from 2012-13 and chaired the Finance Committee. His death was unexpected and a shock to family and friends.

Said CFO and COO Anita Deshommes, “Brian was very sharp; he brought some much-needed discipline and infrastructure to Growing Home’s financial management. He was also funny and what we call a ‘heart’ person. He found the stories of the families Growing Home serves very moving.”

His friends saw him in the same light. Said one, “Brian was one of those people that you just fell in love with right away. His smile was contagious, his guitar playing enjoyable, his love for Colleen and his family undeniable, and his friendship meaningful.”

Said another, “He had no problem dancing like nobody was watching, and even if they were, he wouldn’t care as long as he was enjoying life and making Colleen smile.”

Building Homes Society

In 2018, Growing Home will celebrate its twentieth year of operation. Serving more and more families each year, Growing Home has established itself as an essential part of the south Westminster community. We are grateful for our supporters who want to see Growing Home sustain its role in creating a brighter future for the families we serve.

Interested in finding out more about how you can join the Criswell Planned Giving Society? Please contact Chief Development Officer Pell Fender at pell@growinghome.org or 720-407-1986.
Donors
Thank you to all who make Growing Home what it is today!
TAKE A TOUR
INVITE A FRIEND AND JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT “WELCOME HOME” TOUR.
TOURS ARE HOSTED AT GROWING HOME. RSVP AT WWW.GROWINGHOME.ORG

GROWING HOME
3489 W. 72ND AVE. SUITE 112, WESTMINSTER, CO 80030
PHONE: 303-426-0430 | FAX: 303-426-0560 | WWW.GROWINGHOME.ORG