WFED Site Visit Reports

### 2021/22 Grant Year

**Extensions granted from last year:**

**El Dorado High School’s Studio 81**

$6,000 Acorn Grant – Ranked, The Musical

**Contact:** Paul Tomei  Maggie Bush  
**Liaison:** Steve Schwarzbach

**WFED Attendees:** Emogene Haller, Steve Schwarzbach, Dickson Schwarzbach (WFED Past Chair)  
**Site Visit:** Jun 11, 2021 – Performance of "Ranked the Musical" at EDHS's Studio 81

*Ranked the Musical* is a near-future, dystopian view of the academic pressures facing high school students today, written by 2 local high school graduates. Originally the production was planned for June of 2021, but COVID delayed the whole process of putting on a production by a year, and even then it was necessary to have COVID-safety measures in place. The *Ranked* project brought together teachers and students from 4 high schools, including drama and music teachers, a student orchestra, 60 students on stage, and 20 students working behind the scenes.

Our site visit involved watching the performance in the outdoor Carl Borelli amphitheater, and it was thoroughly enjoyable as well as thought-provoking. With 4 high schools to draw from (plus
home-schooled students), the talent was superb and the voices and music were excellent. The students were thrilled to have the opportunity to perform after all of the COVID restrictions, and enjoyed bonding with theater-oriented students from other schools. Our grant money revived an inter-school tradition we hope will continue, and also drew attention to the need for repairs in the amphitheater, many of which have already been addressed.

El Dorado and Union Mine High Schools
$30,000 Inspiration Grant 2020/21 - The Connections Project, a Vaping/Drug Prevention Program

Contact: Judy Knapp, judyknapp60@gmail.com, 530-622-3634

Liaisons: Originally Janeen Stewart, then Emogene Haller and Lexie Smith Kliebe

Site Visit: Friday, March 25, 2022 at El Dorado High School (EDHS).

EDHS Attendees: Justin Gatling and Tara Grudin (Assistant Principals), Judy Knapp (BIP Coordinator), Danielle Andrade (teacher), Reef (BIP student)

WFED Attendees: Emogene Haller, Lexie Smith Kliebe, Pam Roberts, and cabinet members Cathy Harris (WFED Coordinator) and Deanne Johnson (WFED Grants Chair).

Brief history: This grant was not funded until late October of 2020 because the start of school was delayed due to COVID-19, and once school started students were only on-campus 2 days a week due to the hybrid model. By June 2021, only 12 students had been served by the Brief Intervention Program (BIP) and $2200 of the grant money had been expended. Then the 2022 school year started with half of the students displaced by the Caldor fire with many not attending school, which delayed getting the Friendly Faces program started, but BIP carried on. The schools are on target to meet their goals and expend their grant funds by the end of school in June.

The overall goal for both the Brief Intervention Program (BIP) and the Friendly Faces program is to provide trauma-informed education and prevention regarding vaping. Over 50 students have been or are now in BIP. We learned that:

● Vaping has largely replaced cigarettes on campus and provides a much stronger “hit” than regular cigarettes or marijuana
● Up 20 students have been taken by ambulance from campus to the hospital due to vaping
● Vaping is now often odorless, can be disguised to look like a thumb drive, and can be stowed and easily retrieved from clothing which is specifically designed for that purpose – very hard for teachers & aides to detect
● Other programs don’t specifically address vaping: Alateen addresses all narcotics, and the TUPE program only pertains to tobacco products
● In addition to 2 Assistant Principals at each campus, EDHS and UMHS have 2 to 3 Campus Monitors who are on the lookout for vaping and other violations and also have good relationships with the students
• Students caught vaping the first time are not suspended, but are pulled from non-core classes to meet with Judy 3 times over a period of several weeks to:
  o Be educated about the dangers of vaping
  o Understand the trauma and stresses which have led them to where they are
  o Receive training on how to deal with their own personal issues such boundaries, boundaries, assertiveness, saying “No,” goal-setting, anger management, social/emotional skills, etc.
  o Review their goals and their best path to achieve them
  o Only after a second infraction is suspension invoked
• Judy also calls or visits the parents and educates them without compromising student confidentiality
• We met with a BIP student who has not vaped for over 3 months and whose best friend has now stopped. He told us how working with Judy changed his outlook and the direction he was headed.
• We read a letter of appreciation from a parent
• Judy showed us some of the write-ups, questionnaires and tools she uses with the students and gave us several handouts

We visited on school-spirit day and many staff members were wearing Friendly Faces t-shirts (right). **Friendly Faces** is a program to ensure that no student has to eat lunch alone. Since students who feel connected to their school are far less likely to be tempted by vaping or other destructive behavior, this is a prevention program. It began in 2019 at Union Mine and was taken on as a project at EDHS by the Friday Night Live club whose teacher sponsor is Danielle Androtti. It is an aspect of vaping prevention. We observed one of their lunchtime meetings.

The club members received training on how to reach out to students who are eating alone, and to respect their wishes if they don’t want to talk right then. By engaging solitary students in conversation they are letting them know someone notices them and that they are welcome to be part of the school community. The Friendly Faces members offer a gift bag with cool items they have put together, and are also hosting a Back-to-School BBQ and encouraging participation in their club. An unexpected benefit of the program is that students in the club are learning by trial & error the best way to engage with other students, and are having to discuss, regroup, problem-solve and try new approaches to come across as lower-key, less intimidating and more empathetic.

The combined accomplishments for the two schools as documented in the interim report:
• 42 students are in or have completed the Brief Intervention Program [now 50+ students]
• 3 Friendly Faces training sessions for 32 students and 2 staff have been held
• 85% of BIP students demonstrated an increase in their drug knowledge and how drugs effect their developing brain, health, and relationships.
• 100% of students set goals to reduce drug use and work on improving grades
• 98% of students increased their knowledge of healthy coping skills
• 95% of students with anger issues increased their knowledge of anger management skills.
• 80% of students could identify three community resources after completion
• 100% of parents spoken to felt more supported and connected to school and community.
• 10 parents/families wanted and received multiple visits from facilitator as they wanted to learn more to help their child and families
• 8 parents wanted referrals for continued counseling/therapy
• So far, 27 students stopped all drug use after completion of program as shown by follow-up one to two months after completion of program.
Inspiration Grants 2021/22

New Morning Youth and Family Services

$26,000 Inspiration Grant – Queer Youth Advocacy Project

Contact: Kristen Patterson, Shelter Director, kristen@newmorningyfs.org, (530) 622-5551 or (530) 626-4190
Liaison: Jill Williams

Shelter attendees: Kristen and 3 youth from the shelter
WFED Attendees: Jill Williams, Lexie Smith Klieber, Pam Roberts, Emogene Haller
Site Visit: February 18, 2022 at the shelter

The original grant proposal set these goals:
- Re-establish its LGBTQ+ Youth Support Group virtually
- Provide education and support resources for LGBTQ+ youth
- Strengthen therapeutic and case management services for this population
- Continue to provide a safe emergency shelter for these youth
- Strengthen collaborations with community partners to keep these youth safe

We met with Kristen, toured the youth shelter, and learned about current improvements planned. New Morning will launch a Capital campaign in April 2022 (the Marshall Foundation has funded a start-up loan and New Morning will soon start the campaign) to raise funds to improve the outside space, add a gazebo for shade, and create an enclosed learning space off the living room, as well as to enclose the space under the deck to create weatherproof storage for bikes and other donations.

Youth find their way to the shelter via various resources. Referrals can come from school nurses, CASA volunteers, CPS (child protective services) workers, local therapists and social workers as well as word of mouth. The federal government funds 21 days of shelter for runaway and homeless children; however, many of the children still have no home at the end of that period and staff reapply for longer stays.

Some of the children have had a friend commit suicide or die from a drug overdose. Fentanyl (80-100 times stronger than morphine) is the most affordable available street drug in our area at this time. These children often come from families which are homeless and struggling with drug addiction. There is a screening process, and some are not accepted into the program if, for example, there is danger of suicide or active drug abuse.

The shelter can host up to 12 youth (2 per room, and a total of 6 bedrooms). There are separate wings for boys and girls – they are trying to come up with gender-neutral names for
the wings. Upon arrival at the shelter, each young person may choose which side they want to live on, and it is an accepted practice to change sides over the course of a stay as he/she become more grounded in their gender identity. We met with one youth who has lived on both sides. Kids established in residence mentor the new arrivals and the consensus of the three we met with was that they find the shelter welcoming, it creates a sense of family, and they appreciate that they are all treated equally and there is consistent support. The grant funds help with therapy for kids who identify as LGBTQ, which is important because many of these children would not be eligible for Medi-Cal funded therapy as they do not have a diagnosed mental illness.

Funds are also used to purchase clothing for the children who often come to the shelter with only the clothes they are wearing. There are two closets maintained (one in each wing) and the kids are welcome to take what they need. The gift card donations provide a way for the staff to take the kids shopping and they can purchase what they really want to wear.

The kids stay an average of 21 days with staff guidance to assist them in rejoining their families if this is possible. Homeless youth stay an average of 2 months, runaways an average of 2 weeks and those in foster care stay an average of one week. No one is discharged to homelessness, so some stays are longer. We asked about how the food is - they said it depends on who's cooking :). There is a fully stocked kitchen and pantry where the meals are prepared daily. They are free to make their own snacks.

The staff training is active and ongoing. All undergo 40 hours of training plus a two-week orientation (same for the volunteers). Current staff to resident ratio is 1:1. Staff turnover is common as many are younger people in training for degrees in social work or psychology and graduation usually results in their needing clinic hours or graduate school.

There is a true focus on community education and Kristen described the classes held for community members such as CASA volunteers, school nurses, Unity Care, etc. Originally, they had only scheduled 2 classes, but have since held 3 more and there is demand for more education. This knowledge is so important to both the shelter and the broader community as it helps embrace the diverse needs of the LGBTQ+ youth and build on existing resources available to them. Additional funding will allow for more community outreach and education.

Best take-away by far was stated to be self-acceptance, which is beyond wonderful! Kids are guided into groups, individual counseling and other resources as needed and there is art and music made available to them on-site. They learn that gender identity is gender choice. The after school drop-in program (kids being raised by parents and/or grandparents) helps families get a needed time-out break as well as give these kids extra amounts of attentive support. Universally they indicated that it is a safe place, feels like home and gives them a place to be accepted and to develop friendships. While they have all come from difficult family situations, they all feel accepted and comfortable at the Shelter. It was lovely listening to these students and being able to appreciate how much of a difference our grant is making in service of this community. They have had 80 youth come to in-person meetings and have over 100 who
regularly chat and post on the **Discord server** (defined as a group-chatting platform originally built for gamers that has since become a general use platform for many kinds of communities. Discord is divided into servers, each of which has its own members, topics, rules, and channels., which is monitored by adults and is a safe virtual space).

Clearly this program is working well for many, as evidenced by the clients wanting to give back to New Morning through money they earn at a job (buying items for other clients), donating back clothing, and becoming staff and/or training to become social workers to help kids “like them.” This speaks volumes for the services provided and impact felt by those being served and educated.

The grant funds are being spent primarily on staffing, and they are replacing one of the volunteer positions with a paid staff position. If the funds have not been completely expended by the end of the grant year the plan is to roll any surplus into the same program for next year.

Wish list:
- Van for transportation
- Storage for donations and bikes; gazebo for outside events and gatherings
- Donation of clothing for older teens - Adult sizes and plus sized including large, XL, XXL, etc. Many of the current donations are in smaller sizes (child) and do not accommodate the teenagers.
- Gift Cards - Walmart, Target, Zumiez, Tillys, Marshalls - gift cards are important because new clients often show up with just the clothes they have on their backs. It’s nice for the teens to select new age-appropriate clothing that fits correctly. Children will often donate these clothes back to New Morning as they outgrow them. The kids also really like Bean Barn, Starbucks and Jamba Juice cards

**Snowline Hospice**

**$26,000 Inspiration Grant 2020/21 - A Nurse-Led, Home-Based Palliative Care for patients with Advanced Dementia**

**Contact:** Lori Scoville, lscoville@snowlinehospice.org  
**Liaison:** Emogene Haller  
**Site Visit:** November 10, 2021 at Snowline Hospice, 493 Pleasant Valley Rd, Diamond Springs  
**Attendees:** Lori Scoville (Snowline), Amarik Singh, Julie Willson, Cathy Harris (WFED Membership Chair), Dickson Schwarzbach (WFED Past Chair)

**Program Overview**
- The focus is on palliative care for dementia patients and to educate and support their family members who care for them.
- The project began in January. Since then, materials, hand-outs and instructional materials have been developed. These are provided to discharge planners.
● To date, 22 patients have been served. Each patient sees a physician (Dr. Ellinwood) and is assigned an RN and MSW social worker/counselor. Approximately half of the grant funds have been used ($13,000) so there is funding for another six months of service. The average length of stay in the program is 60-90 days.

● A team goes into the home. The RN addresses how to help the patient and the MSW addresses how to support the caregiver.

● Families are supported through symptoms management and education.

● The need for the program was seen when dementia patients were near the end of life and eligible for hospice care. Snowline Hospice staff recognized that patients can have dementia for a long time before they were eligible for hospice and that these patients and caregivers needed support to manage the dementia.

The Supportive Care Program provides the following:

● Educate family on disease trajectory. Many family members don’t realize that dementia is a fatal disease.

● Help with symptom management

● Discuss goals of care. What is important to them and what do they care about at this time?

● Assist with Advanced Healthcare Directive.

● Provide support through information on accessing community resources and spiritual care.

● If the patient is a veteran, help them to access resources available for veterans.

What have been the barriers due to Covid-19 for operating the program?

● At first there was a lack of PPE.

● We had to reassess how to see patients. MediCare relaxed some rules which made this easier.

● We had to get testing.

● We needed to educate patients, caregivers, and staff.

● We had hoped to work with the Senior Day Program. The program primarily serves dementia patients and provides a break for care givers. The program is not operating due to Covid-19. Having this program reopen would be very beneficial.

● Most of the program referrals are from primary care doctors. Fewer in-office appointments can impact the number of referrals.

Were there impacts from the Caldor Fire?

● Many of the dementia patients were evacuated due to the Caldor Fire. Snowline reached out to all of the evacuated patients to see if they had a plan and to see if the Snowline Family could help. Evacuated families received free items from the Snowline Hospice stores.

Were there any unforeseen barriers?

● A key staff member had to leave because their spouse had a military deployment.

● It is harder to coordinate care with Covid-19 safety concerns.

What are the grant outcomes to date? (six months into the project)
One of the program goals is to reduce emergency room (ER) visits and hospitalizations. This is done by helping caregivers so they can help their loved one without an ER visit. Caregivers have 24-hour access to a nurse for advice. For the 22 patients served, 50% of the had an ER or hospital admission. Since beginning the program, the rate has been reduced to 13%. One patient has gone into the hospital due to a broken hip.

- 17 patients have had advanced care planning.
- For 77% of patients there has been an interview with the caregiver. (Some are reluctant due to Covid-19)
- 91% have had support with symptoms management
- A caregiver assessment has been completed. Scores are still being processed.

What are plans for continuing the program?
- The program was planned as a pilot. We will be in contact with payers and providers about what the program can offer and the cost avoidance from providing for dementia patients at home instead of in the ER or hospital.
- We are lobbying for palliative care payment at the federal level. MediCare doesn’t pay for palliative care. The grant gave us an opportunity to see what the program could do.
- It would be great to provide music therapy for dementia patients.

Notes for Future Reference
- For every $5,000 received, Snowline Hospice can provide 81 days of care for a patient. This includes a physician visit, monthly support from an RN and social worker, 24/7 nursing access and in-home nursing as needed.
- Snowline Hospice serves El Dorado, Sacramento, and Placer Counties. It opened over 40 years ago when hospice care wasn’t covered by MediCare.

Impact Grants 2021/22

EDCOE Homeless Education Program

$8,000 Impact Grant – McKinney-Vento Urgent Needs Fund
Contact: Margaret Lewis (Homeless Youth Coordinator), mlewis@edcoe.org
Liaison: Wanda Kilbourne
Site Visits:
Jan 28, 2022 at Golden Sierra HS
Attended by Emogene Haller, Pam Roberts, Wanda Kilbourne; Margaret Lewis and Bridget Isham (F.A.S.T. Coordinator)
Jan 31, 2022 at Pinewood Elementary
Attended by Emogene Haller, Wanda Kilbourne and Wendy Goossen; Margaret Lewis, Carlyn Spencer (Counselor), Chris Arnett (School Psychologist), Deborah Atkins (Principal)
Fairly broad parameters were set up for the Emergency fund

In El Dorado County, approximately 850 children experience homelessness during a given year. Margaret Lewis established the McKinney-Vento Emergency Fund to be able to respond immediately to urgent needs of students in the McKinney-Vento program “to be able to remove barriers to a student’s success” (not including transportation costs, vehicle repair, or housing) with an expenditure cap of $200. Every day of missed school is a barrier to success for students already living with trauma. Examples of how the funds have been used include:

- Providing shoes or eyeglasses when they have been lost due to fleeing a violent situation or the Caldor fire
- De-lousing a vehicle being used for housing, causing the student to be reinfected daily and therefore unable to attend school
- Providing access to food

McKinney-Vento liaisons, school nurses, counsellors and others who assist McKinney-Vento students are made aware of the fund.

We visited both a high school and an elementary school to get a good feel for how the program operates. First we met with the F.A.S.T. (Families And Schools Together) Coordinator at Golden Sierra High School in Garden Valley in a large room stocked with canned goods (provided by the Hands4Hope Emergency Food Pantry), clothing and a washer & dryer (provided by MJ’s Project), and other items for students in need. Bridget explained that she has developed a list of about 80 people and organizations she can contact to meet a student’s needs, and only uses the Emergency fund if the need can’t be met quickly enough by one of the other providers. (She mentioned that she often reaches out first to MJ’s Project because Nikki is so responsive.)

Next we visited Pinewood Elementary. Generally this small school has only 4 or 5 students who qualify for McKinney-Vento aid, but the Caldor fire occurred only 6 days after the start of school and burned the homes of 60 students and 2 staff members, so the number went to the mid 60s. The Coordinator utilized $2000 of the grant funds to purchase personal hygiene items, gas card, food cards and store cards for clothing to meet immediate needs as wider scale response was being developed, and also procured backpacks with school supplies for students whose homes had been lost. The school staff had such a monumental task to try to locate and help so many families all at once that it was wonderful to be able to offer immediate aid. Needs are ongoing as the reality and permanence of the losses caused by the fire sink in.

**Hands4Hope-Youth Making a Difference**

$8,000 Impact Grant for a Youth-led Emergency Food Pantry

**Contact:** Jennifer Bassett, info@hands4hhopeyouth.org, 916.294.7426

**Liaison:** Amarik Singh

**Site Visit:** Friday, December 9, 2021 at the Hands4Hope Placerville Youth Center
Hands4Hope Attendees: Jennifer Bassett, Executive Director and Melissa Placek, Education Program Coordinator from Hands4Hope and 4 youth volunteers
WFED Attendees: Amarik Singh, Liz Drummond (WFED AdHoc Cabinet member)

Although Ms. Placek was present, the youth volunteers provided the WFED committee members with detailed information and tour of the Emergency Food Pantry (EFP). We were advised the EFP was developed to provide local students and their families with necessary meals, as the COVID-19 pandemic caused several families to struggle to meet basic necessities. The EFP partnered with several local agencies, such as the Eldorado County Office of Education, the Twin Lakes Food Bank, and the Placer Food Bank to be able to provide meals for families in need.

The EFP started December 2020 and occupies space within the Hands4Hope Placerville Youth Center. The building was formally a medical office, and therefore, the EFP is able to use several rooms for their needs. The EFP has designated areas for donation intake and food storage.

The EFP committee members advised that they receive food from donations from the public and business, through food drives. They take donations received, weigh and sort items, then store items in the pantry until they are distributed.

The EFP committee members, who are high school student volunteers, spend several hours a month sorting and organizing the donated items. Additionally, they receive donations from the food bank partners, and they will purchase necessary items that are not donated. Such items include spices.
The EFP receives information from their community partners to indicate the number of families that need to receive meals. The EFP committee prepares a box for each family in need. The food box contains vegetables, fruit, grains, condiments, meat, and snacks. Each box contains three meals for three days, totaling 35 to 45 pounds of food. The EFP has been trained by a nutrition educator to learn which items to place in each box, and the nutrition educator also provides recipes and cookbooks that are often provided in the food boxes. The EFP distributes food boxes bi-monthly, serving 30 to 40 families a month.

The Hands4Hope EFP has utilized WFED grant funds to create this food pantry. They have used funds for supplies, materials, and supplemental items and expect to spend all the funds by the end of the grant period.

**Mother Lode Rehabilitation (M.O.R.E)**

**$8,000 Impact Grant** – Feeding El Dorado County  
**Contacts:** Kelli Nuttall ([NuttallK@morerehab.org](mailto:NuttallK@morerehab.org)), Susie Davies (Executive Director)  
**susiedavies@morerehab.org**  
**Liaison:** Julie Willson  
**WFED Attendees:** Emogene Haller, Julie Willson, Wendy Goossen, Cathy Harris (WFED Coordinator), Deanne Johnson (Grants Chair)  
**Site Visit:** November 3, 2021 at the new M.O.R.E. facility, 399

M.O.R.E. requested WFED grant money for a very straightforward purpose – to complete the purchase of an emergency backup generator to power their walk-in refrigerator/freezer and keep their kitchen fully functional even during a power outage. Their brand-new building includes a commercial kitchen intended not only to feed M.O.R.E. clients, but also to provide seniors with another option for a healthful midday meal, as well as being an emergency food distribution center in case of a disaster.

It took only a few minutes to see the generator we had funded, but the true value of our site visit was in touring the entire, brand-new M.O.R.E. building and glimpsing some of the potential benefits for our whole community. As an example, during the Caldor Fire, M.O.R.E. collaborated with John Sanders to serve 4 meals at the KOA camp, which was not on the county radar and did not have meal preparation capabilities. About 150-175 people were fed at the first dinner, and the numbers decreased down to 100 by the 4th dinner as the occupancy there fell.

There were so many details that were thoughtfully included in the design of the building such as the fan over the food delivery door to keep insects out while the automatic doors are in
operation. The building design supports offering classes in drama, music, art, gardening, and the ability to record podcasts and music in their very own sound booth, which is inspiring for the clients and is intended to be made available to the community. The dining room can accommodate a small group or be opened up to possibly seat a Women’s Fund meeting and dinner. The music room can seat a small group to watch movies or be opened up to become a full stage for hosting performances. Major donors were asked to submit an meaningful quote to be inscribed on the wall of a room, so it is inspiring just to walk around the building!

Still planning for the future, construction of an outdoor theater has begun which will include shade trees and picnic tables as well as an area for entertainment. Adjacent is a walking path that encircles the entire campus.

Director Susie Davies has the passion for M.O.R.E. clients and for the larger community in which we live, and spent many years creating her dream. We are so honored that WFED was able to play a small role in making her dream become a reality.
**Acorn Grants 2021/22**

**Housing El Dorado**

$8,000 Acorn Grant - Technology - Creating a Bridge to Self-Sufficiency for the County's Vulnerable

**Contacts:** Julia Hackett, Maureen Dion-Perry

**Liaison:** Pam Roberts

**Site Visit:** Friday, March 25, 2022 at El Dorado High School (EDHS).

**Attendees:**
Housing El Dorado: Charlie McDonald, Frank Porter, Julia Hackett, Maureen Dion-Perry
WFED Site Visit Committee: Emogene Haller, Lexie Smith Klieber, Pam Roberts

Housing El Dorado has three areas of work: **service** (emergency, transitional, permanent shelter, showers, navigation to other support services), **advocacy** (policy work on the County & City level, building partnership with developers), and **education** (presentations to civic groups).

Housing El Dorado’s method of servicing people who are currently unhoused is a **“housing first”** approach that prioritizes a decent, safe place to live permanently, then those being served can work towards improving health, reducing harmful behaviors and/or increase income. People need basic necessities like food and a place to live before attending to anything less critical, such as getting a job, budgeting properly, or attending to substance use issues.

**Facts on Homeless Population in El Dorado County**

- 99% are victims of trauma (foster care system, physical and/or sexual abuse, etc.)
- Estimated 60% – 70% struggle with mental health issues
- Estimated 80% also facing substance abuse issues
- Half the time, clients are in the HMIS database accessing other services which allows all agencies to see the spectrum of services each individual might be accessing helping to eliminate duplication of services

**Strengths of Organization**

- Strong and growing partnerships including City, County, ED Food Bank, Upper Room, Public Health, job shelter
- Minimizing duplication of services
- Implementing Strategic Plan that they update regularly
- Currently under the EDCF tax id but close to becoming an independent nonprofit
- Growth in financial capacity, doubling funding each fiscal year over the last 18 months which increases service capacity
Dedicated and passionate Board and staff supported by EDCF training and expertise in nonprofit management

Service Issues / challenges

- Transportation – vans were donated and they are older with maintenance issues
- Year-round shelter facility
- COVID eviction moratorium is being lifted in March, concerned about a flood of evictions for low income and elderly

Future Goals

- Need an Executive Director
- A second printer to have it at multiple locations
- Safe Parking site
- Saved money on hotspots, requesting to shift grant funds to transportation (or could be that second printer)
- Seek to operate small, transitional shelters - 6-room homes with long-term leasing

Quotes

“We would not be where we are without the El Dorado Community Foundation.” - Frank Porter, Vice-President/Treasurer

“EDH staff can’t work harder than they (the clients) do. It’s about empowering people we serve.”

“ED County is 20 years behind every other county when addressing homelessness.”

Imagination Theater

$8,000 Acorn Grant - Empowering Youth through Performing Arts

Contacts: Becca Kaldunski, President, beccakal@yahoo.com, 530-957-8647
Laura Bonham, Treasurer lbonham13@gmail.com 530-391-1206

Liaison: Wendy Goossen

Site Visit: Friday, March 25, 2022 at El Dorado High School (EDHS).

I.T. Attendees: Becca Kaldunski (President), Laura Bonham (Treasurer), Kim Allen (Board Member, Actor), Peter Wolfe (Artistic Director)

WFED Attendees: Emogene Haller, Pam Roberts, Wendy Goossen and Cathy Harris (WFED Coordinator)

This grant is a two-year grant, originally proposed as:
Year 1: Development and implementation of a series of 8 workshops targeting engaging youth in producing, directing and participating in Community Theaters and involving 10 to 20 students

Year 2: Fund up to 3 performances for youth directed by youth, involving about 60 students in each production.

Based on the original proposal, progress is behind schedule due to personnel changes in the I.T. Board, closures at the Fairgrounds, and the strong desire to delay workshops until they could be held in person rather than via Zoom. So far none of the grant funds have been spent. However, organizational progress has been made:

- They have established a project manager and a committee of volunteers to carry out the various stages of their plan
- They sent out a survey to over 70 students who had been involved with I.T. in some way in the past, and have received 13 responses
- They held their first focus group for 10 teens with past experience with I.T. to get them engaged and to gather feedback on what the workshops should address, which we attended.

The workshop was led by Laura and Becca, who had well-planned activities to get the youth immediately involved. They got the students to interact using “name that tune” and breaking them into small groups to silently act out a machine for the others to identify from their acting. The 10 youth participants had a variety of different interests in the performing arts and planning of a production. The Affinity Protocol was used to aid the youth in identifying what areas of production need to be included in future workshops and where their own interests lie. The adults provided a framework and guidance, but the ideas came from the youth and they worked well together in teams: their enthusiasm and the experience of working together seemed to take the workshop to another level. The students were very engaged and were not looking at their phones (!). Based on the focus group we observed, we can easily imagine how the learning workshops and implementing youth-led productions will meet the goals of developing creativity, leadership skills, social emotional skills, and a greater appreciation of the arts for our local youth. The participants were asked to spread the word and help get other interested students involved.

Laura and Becca believe they will be able to make up for lost time and laid out a plan and timeline in their interim report to meet their goals to hold 8 workshops and promote up to 3 youth-led productions by the end of May of next year.

**MJ’s Project**

$8,000 Acorn Grant – Homeless and at-risk teen/young adult assistance

Contact: Nikki Gardea, President, info@mjsproject.org, (530) 712-0665
Liaison: Pam Roberts
WFED Attendees: Amarik Singh, Emogene Haller, Wanda Kilbourne, Wendy Goossen

Site Visit: December 1, 2021 at Independence High School + storage trailer at Green Valley Church

MJ’s Project is a very new 501(c)(3) which provides feminine hygiene and full-size personal hygiene products, food to eat outside of school, holiday food, clothes, new school shoes and backpacks, school supplies, gas cards, lice treatment, laundry soap, furniture, appliances, individual personal needs, prom attire, Christmas gifts and mentoring to at-risk and homeless teens and young adults. It also supplies school closets with freezers and refrigerators, food, and washers and dryers for use by homeless students. These items and services are provided on-site at middle and high schools on the western slope. Most schools are short on space so there may be one location at the school for clothing, one for food, and one for personal hygiene products, situated and organized so students can grab what they need quickly in the 5 minutes or so they have between classes. MJ’s Project serves young people in need and is not limited to students who qualify for McKinney-Vento services.

We visited Independence HS and were blown away both by the plight of so many houseless and at-risk teens and by how much MJ’s project is accomplishing by gaining support from school administrators and educators, partnering with sponsors, and marshalling volunteers. On the day we handed over our grant check, Independence was offered a large supply of meat, so Nikki immediately bought a freezer and brought it to the school so the meat could be saved for the students. We heard testimonials from the principal and her assistant as well as the school counsellor, and saw students directly benefiting from the services and supplies. More than one student approached Nikki and took her aside to talk as we toured the school. Our grant money was also used to buy storage shelves and totes to organize and store the food for quick access.

We left the high school and met at the storage trailer Green Valley Church allows her to keep on the premises. There we saw a student who lost her home to the Caldor fire stop by to pick up cool new Vans shoes – she was thrilled. We also saw where the Vans shoes and backpacks are kept; where prom dresses are stored until prom time when they set up a glamorous dressing room to make dress selection special; and where tents and sub-zero sleeping bags are stored for truly houseless students who are roughing it.

Nikki’s passion for this project (which was started by her teen-age daughter) and her heart for kids are clearly evident. She changed her work schedule so she has Wednesdays off to devote entirely to MJ’s Project. Her phone goes off constantly. She partnered with Vans so she can give out cool shoes and backpacks like the other kids have. She is cultivating new board members and they are all taking classes from the El Dorado Community Foundation on how to grow and improve their nonprofit, so hopefully MJ’s Project will be less of a “one-man-show” in the future.