



## The Dream Team

Making a Difference  
Together

OUR STORY | SUMMER 2020



THE Center FOR  
Family  
Outreach

HOPE. EMPOWER. CHANGE.



# Change the World

**PROLOGUE:** This amazing collaboration began in February 2020, when some PSD Social Workers visited The Center for Family Outreach and met with Laurie Klith to talk about their services and the amazing work of TCFFO. We discussed the difficulties our students and families encounter in the summer months when students are out of school and their support systems are not with them daily. We discussed a partnership with TCFFO and PSD Social Workers during the summer. PSD Social Workers are not on contract and many would love to continue to work with kids and families in our community during the summer months. We often already have relationships with many of the kids and families as well as the relationships with community providers. The collaboration just made sense. Laurie said “we need to find a grant and make this work”, and she did.



# Our Story



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Covid, a global pandemic, hit in March. Schools were moved to remote, and, in May, Laurie contacted us to let us know that she had found a Behavior Health Grant for Larimer County in partnership with OtterBox funds and El Pomar Foundation that would allow us to collaborate throughout the summer. The challenge was that the grant application was due in about 2–3 days! Laurie worked hard to complete the grant, and found PSD social workers who really wanted to partner and the collaboration began.





# 2

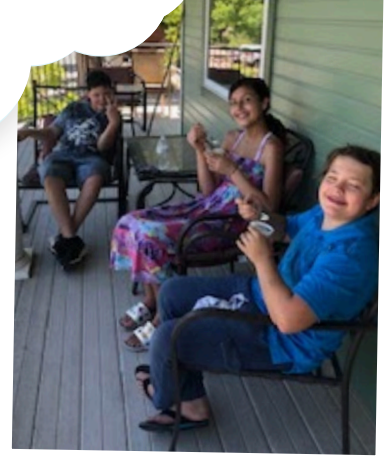
Trish Van Horsen, Lisa Mahler, Natala Paroz, and Katelyn Johnson are the PSD social workers who signed up to collaborate with TCFFO. The new team began meeting with Laurie and TCFFO staff to plan and coordinate services and activities. What a wonderful collaboration! We did a lot of brainstorming of ideas on how to best support kids over the summer (during Covid) and get them involved in activities that would help develop empathy, social skills, emotional regulation, compassion, build resilience, participate in service learning and just have some FUN! TCFFO family intervention specialists gave us referrals for kids (ages 12-18) who could benefit from some summer enrichment programs. We had 17 kids referred, and we were excited to get going! We were planning on meeting in small groups three times a week, with masks, practicing social distancing and making sure to follow any county guidelines. We started ordering supplies, making plans for each group, and connecting with parents. We were ready and excited to start in early June.



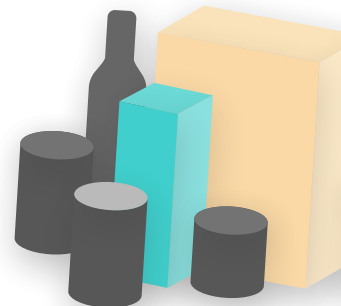
Take  
Action

**A ROADBLOCK:** TCFFO was flooded and we were unable to access the building all summer, so we continued to brainstorm about where to hold our groups. We reached out to The Matthew's House, an amazing community resource that works with Larimer County youth and families. This non-profit has been working with the school district and TCFFO for twenty years, supporting so many kids and families in a variety of different ways. The Matthew's House was so gracious and offered us the use of their facility so we could see kids in person, socially distanced, following the county regulations. They offered the use of their garden beds to plant flowers and vegetables that our kids could tend and nurture throughout the summer. This was another amazing gift during these difficult times!

In addition, The Matthew's House works with the Larimer County Food Bank and other local restaurants and businesses that donate food throughout the summer to over 500 people weekly. They offered food and supplies for the 17 youth and families participating in our summer program. The families were so grateful for this additional support throughout the summer. Thank you Matthew's House!



The Matthews House





# Giving Back

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We were ready to begin our amazing summer programming! Groups were scheduled to take place three times a week. We had all the kids meet at The Matthews House. We had two amazing weeks of in person connection with about 17 students, ages 12–18, who needed extra support and fun during summer. So many of the youth had no contact with peers or supportive adults since March when Covid hit. The kids needed this! During these first two weeks, the team focused on building relationships with the youth, starting projects such as coping boxes and gardening.

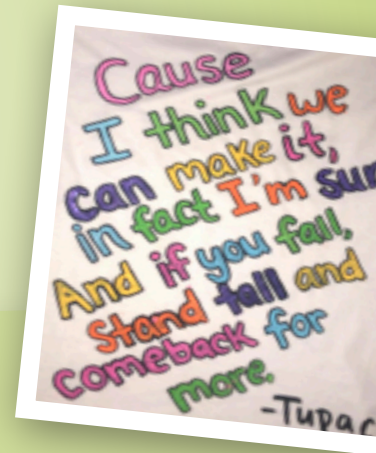


# 4

We had a wonderful two weeks of connection and fun, however, Covid cases were rising, youth were testing positive, and we had to make the hard, but safe decision to move our groups remote. Once again we had a glitch that we needed to work through. We did a lot of connecting with kids and families who were understanding and supportive of moving our groups remote. The team met and reimagined how to shift our planned activities to a remote format.

The first step in this process was to deliver all of the supplies directly to the families. We then made a plan on how to connect with the youth. We decided to meet with high school students one day a week, middle school students one day a week, and all students one day a week. The kids showed up, and we had fun! We shared lots of laughter, connecting conversations and music.

Several kids made cardio drumming videos and shared them with their group. We did a music curriculum and the kids designed their own personal album of music that holds meaning to them. We had each youth paint a flower pot or a canvas that will be delivered to a nursing home to bring some joy to others and give back to the community. All the students also designed a t-shirt with a quote or mantra that holds meaning for them and helps them to stay positive. It is something that they can keep and wear to help them remember to stay mindful.



## Group Activities:

Below is a summary of the group activities that the youth participate in throughout the summer, both in-person and remote:

**COPING BOXES:** all the kids got a coping box to paint and fill with things that help them cope with difficult emotions. These items included, among other things, a journal and glitter pens, a stress ball, peppermints, gum, lotion, chapstick, paper, sketch book, pipe cleaners, fidgets, etc.

**MUSIC THERAPY:** We utilized a Music Curriculum called “Playlist of My Life” which asks kids to find songs that relate to their life. We also did “Cardio Drumming.” Each student received an exercise ball, a bucket and drumsticks that they used with their favorite songs, keeping the beat, moving and making music.

**CHECK IN AND CONNECTION:** fun starter conversations to get the group going.





# Community

**GARDENING:** We planted and tended a vegetable garden and flower bed.

**COOKING:** The kids worked together to make protein balls, brownies, rice krispie treats and macaroni and cheese.

**SOCIAL SKILLS:** The youth had the opportunity to discuss and listen to each other's views on different current events, social justice, and their personal journeys and experiences. The youth demonstrated active listening and respect for other group members' viewpoints and opinions.

**FOOD DELIVERY TO FAMILIES IN NEED:** We delivered pre-made food and food boxes to families in the group each week.

**MINDFUL WALKS AND TALKS:** During the first two weeks of in-person groups, the team and the participating youth took several mindful walks in parks and along the river.





BEAUTIFUL PAINTING TO DONATE,  
WHAT AN AMAZING ARTIST THIS  
YOUNG MAN IS!

# 5

**OUR ENDING: LEARNING AND GROWING.** Seventeen youth participated at least once in the program this summer. Ten of these youth participated regularly in both in-person and remote settings. Nine families received weekly food donations and art supplies. At the final group session, two of the high school students asked if the groups could continue throughout the school year. They reported that they had made friendships and important connections that they hoped would continue. A middle school girl stated that “my summer would have been really boring without these groups!”, and reported enjoying the opportunity to connect all summer with her peers.

One of the high school youth attended a group prior to a court appearance. At the beginning of the group, the youth reported feeling highly anxious. After the group, he thanked his peers and the staff, and reported feeling much calmer and positive due to the interactions and support he received. Finally, the PSD social workers will ensure that each participating youth has a trusted adult at their school site by reaching out to the counseling/mental health staff and connecting them to the youth.



# Empowerment

What an amazing experience for the youth and the adults involved! We had a summer filled with unexpected challenges, but so much growth and learning. The kids were amazing, persevered, and loved the connections they made. We are so grateful for this amazing collaboration that allowed youth, family and school district employees to continue to maintain important positive connections during this difficult time.



ANOTHER PAINTING  
TO DONATE



Thank You

Larimer County Behavioral Health Services, OtterCares Foundation and  
El Pomar Foundation for funding this program



“We all believe that children  
are the ones who will change the world”

