

ABILITY CONNECTION COLORADO



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FY 2016 Annual Report to the Community

ABILITY CONNECTION COLORADO

INCLUSIVITY!

One in five Americans live with a disability, and many of these Americans are diagnosed with two or more disabilities (CDC 2015). Some disabilities you can see, and some you cannot. Some disabilities are age or trauma-induced and others occur prenatally. Whatever the disability, at Ability Connection Colorado, we see abilities. We see how

connections improve lives. This is why Ability Connection Colorado focuses on prevention and intervention to ensure all Coloradans with disabilities have an opportunity for a high-quality life and are inclusive members of their communities. In fact, many studies have demonstrated that **inclusivity** is instrumental in realizing an empowered life.

A recent study, for example, illustrates the impact of inclusion in schools. Over the course of just one school year, this study found that preschoolers with disabilities, who attended classes with typical peers, had better language skills than those in segregated classrooms. Children with special needs, who were surrounded by children with weak language

skills, remained far behind their typically-developing peers at the end of the school year (Psychological Science 2014). The findings come from a study of 670 Ohio preschoolers, slightly more than half of whom had a disability like autism, language impairment or Downs Syndrome. All of the children's language skills were measured in the fall and spring with a standardized assessment.

We strive to help create inclusive opportunities for the Coloradans we serve, which means that people with and without disabilities are working and attending school together. Inclusion is one of the important things to do to improve the work environment, productivity and learning. We know that inclusion in education and employment, combined with family support services, changes lives forever. Inclusivity matters, not only for the people with disabilities, but also improves the lives of people without disabilities. For instance, students that are exposed to other students with disabilities report that bullying at their school decreases and acceptance of differences increases (Siperstein 2007).

Your support of Ability Connection Colorado means that you stand with us in working towards inclusion and eliminating isolation and segregation. Thank you for helping us realize our vision of creating a community where people with and without disabilities learn and work together. It is our hope that the upcoming year will mean more Coloradans will lead high quality lives and become an integral part of their communities. With your continued support, we will make Colorado the most inclusive state in the union.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

It's about their futures.

Early education is about creating opportunities to make it in life, whether you are first generation or third. It's about a community that embraces every child, ensuring they are not isolated, and removing the prejudice around disabilities, so they can be successful – at age five or fifty-five. It's ensuring they are ready for school and ready for life.

Children of all abilities learn and thrive at all four (4) of our Creative Options Centers for Early Childhood Education. Our mission is to facilitate individual development for children through family support and a nurturing educational environment. Our focus is on each child's strengths, while promoting his/her social-emotional, cognitive, academic, communicative, and physical development.

Research shows that young children, who experience a high number of adverse childhood situations, have a 90 to 100% chance of developing delays. Our Creative Options Centers for Early Childhood Education, our developmental services and early childhood education minimize this risk and ensure Colorado children reach their greatest potential.

Notable Numbers:

43% average percentage of K-Bound children who made gains in school readiness proficiencies.

87% percentage of parents setting times and focusing on quality time with their children each day.

493 number of families who participated in literacy and reading events and as well as spending 2,160 hours reading to and with their children.

1,545 number of developmental screens conducted to determine the need for extra supports or evaluations for special education services of which 241 children had concerning results that were followed up.

31% percentage of children receiving specialized services, including Special Ed, OT, PT, Speech and Mental Health.

100% percentage of parents in classes stating they will implement new parenting strategies.

Early Childhood Education Programs: 566 Served

Infants, toddlers and preschool children and their families receive early care, intervention, prevention, and other support and educational services.

We serve the entire family, not just the child, and provide the following professionals:

- Early Childhood Educators (Bilingual)
- Special Education Consultants
- School Readiness Coaches
- Mental Health Specialist
- Occupational Therapists
- Speech Language Pathologists and Assistants
- Family Coaches
- Family Services Staff



EMPLOYMENT

Employment Works, for everyone.

It's about self-determination and self-sufficiency. Through our EMPLOYMENT WORKS program, we help ensure that all Coloradans have an opportunity to lead full and productive lives. With this program and with the determination of the individuals we serve, we have changed the face of employment. We have moved individuals into greater means of self-sufficiency – sometimes making the difference between living in poverty and without resources to becoming more independent and contributing to their own lives in more meaningful ways.

This amazingly powerful program helps individuals participate more fully in life, become self-sufficient, and have greater success. It is important, it has impact – and it has changed the way people view those with disabilities. We now have communities embracing those who are differently abled and seeing them for the courageous, strong, and skilled individuals they are. That is success – and we have so many to thank for this. We appreciate your support for this program – and the thousands of Coloradans it serves – and changes.

Notable Numbers:

1,320 number of individuals who received intensive case management.

2,785 number of individuals served through the Social Security WIPA/BOND programs.

100% percentage of youth enrolled in the Ready to Achieve Mentoring Program (RAMP) who have completed the course and successfully transitioned to the next grade or will be attending college in the fall.

Employment Works Programs: 3,060 Served

Leo's Story

Leo has been a RAMP program participant for two years at KIPP Collegiate High School in Denver. Leo quickly emerged as a leader in the classroom because of his enthusiasm for learning and the effort he put into writing his RAMP Individual Mentoring Plan (IMP). Leo always put a lot of thought into his weekly RAMP goals and did his best to meet his goals every week. He understands that accomplishing small goals will lead him to accomplishing larger goals to help him find success and to influence his future in a positive way. This year, Leo's RAMP mentors supported him in searching and preparing for his first entry-level summer job. RAMP helped Leo complete a job application, role play and practice interview questions, and make a great first impression with a big smile and a firm handshake. Leo was hired on the spot after his first interview with Elitch Gardens! He called the RAMP Coordinator following his interview to say that participating in RAMP helped him with his confidence during his interview. He is currently working as an Elitch guest services associate part-time. Leo was so excited to be working at his favorite theme park over the summer!

Leo, Employment Works Client

Leo's story is not unique, this is what EMPLOYMENT WORKS does. Employment is more than work; it is being able to live independently and self-sufficiently. Employment also helps us to feel valuable, it builds confidence, and it builds community.



STATEWIDE SUPPORT

It's about providing the tools necessary to help families thrive.

Statewide Family Support Services' Five programs helped **38,588** struggling families advocate for their loved ones and share critical resources to help them thrive.

- **EMPOWER Colorado** provides support, education and advocacy for families of children of all ages with mental health issues. **3,577 Served**
- **Faith in Action** matches individuals with disabilities annually with supportive faith communities and volunteers to assist them with activities of daily living. **2,615 Served**
- **Guardianship Alliance of Colorado** (GAC) provides guardianship services, training and information in related matters for adults with disabilities, who are unable to make their own legal or medical decisions. **8,494 Served**
- **Infantile Scoliosis Outreach Program** (ISOP) raises awareness of parents, orthopedic surgeons, their technologists and family practitioners regarding the availability and effectiveness of a life-saving, non-invasive, Early Treatment (ET) Process for infantile scoliosis, often resulting in a cure. **7,850 Served**
- **Parent to Parent** (P2P) provides emotional and informational support to parents of sons and daughters with special health care needs and disabilities. **16,052 Served**

Notable Numbers:

51,353 Number of volunteer hours contributed across all statewide family support programs.

Statewide Family Support Programs: 38,588 Served

Making a difference.

- “ When I think of my work representing the Guardianship Alliance of Colorado (GAC) in guardianship cases for mentally ill respondents at the state hospitals, two themes immediately come to mind: respect and protection. These themes are interwoven throughout the cases that GAC and I have seen first-hand: the respect GAC case managers have for the respondent's personal and legal rights. I am humbled by the lengths that they go through to be respectful of the client's needs – emotionally, socially and medically – in finding the appropriate placement for the respondent. I am also impressed that the case managers develop a relationship with the client and work with the doctors to provide the respondent with the protections that he or she needs and markedly improve their quality of life.

” — Paula Young, Esq.



THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Dear Friends and Families of Ability Connection Colorado,

On behalf of Ability Connection Colorado, we would like to thank you for all of your support this year. Whether you sponsored an event, helped fund a vital program, donated to Colorado Gives Day, or provided an in-kind donation, you made it possible for us to realize a community where people of all abilities learn and work together. Together, our vision for inclusion is that everyone is a valued and participatory member of our community. ACCO programs help us to make this vision a reality. Together, we are making Colorado a more inclusive place to live. This year, 42,214 Coloradans benefited from our work, thanks to your support.

EDUCATION

This year, 566 children from birth to age five enrolled in four Creative Options Centers for Early Childhood Education. Because our wait list continues to grow, a fifth Creative Options Center will be added in an Aurora community of significant need. As Aurora's head start and early head start provider, we have embraced the challenge to ensure every child with special needs receives intervention and prevention necessary to live full, productive lives. In the upcoming year, we will expand our services to include more family coaches and mental health providers.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Works provided employment related services to 3,060 people with disabilities this year. Services include Social Security benefits and work incentive planning, skill development, mentoring, and adult and youth job development and placement. These services resulted in participants deciding to become employed for the first time or re-employed, ultimately reducing their use of benefits. Employment Works' Ready to Achieve Mentoring Program engaged youth, who are at risk of becoming part of the criminal justice system, to partner with a business mentor and pursue and explore possible career paths. Employment Works reaches Coloradans throughout the state, including the Western Slope, and this year we hope to expand our reach and reach those in our state's most rural corners.

SUPPORT

Our statewide support services reached 38,588 Coloradans this year and provided critical services and resources to help parents advocate and care for their sons and daughters with disabilities at every stage of life. You might know these programs as Parent to Parent, Guardianship Alliance, Infantile Scoliosis Outreach Program, EMPOWER Colorado and Faith In Action. If you know someone in need of support services, please let them know about Ability Connection Colorado!

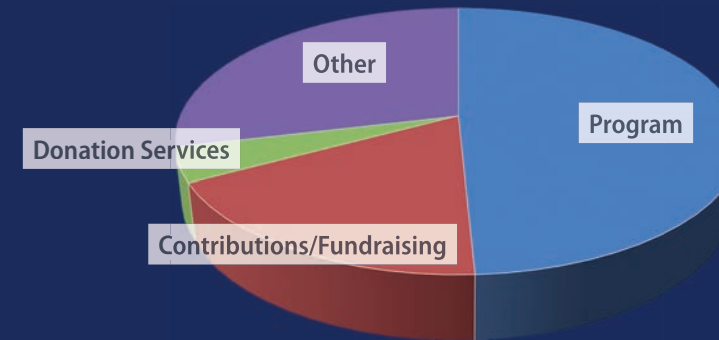
None of these accomplishments would be possible without you. Once again, thank you for your confidence and support of Ability Connection Colorado. Together, we really do so much more.

Sincerely,

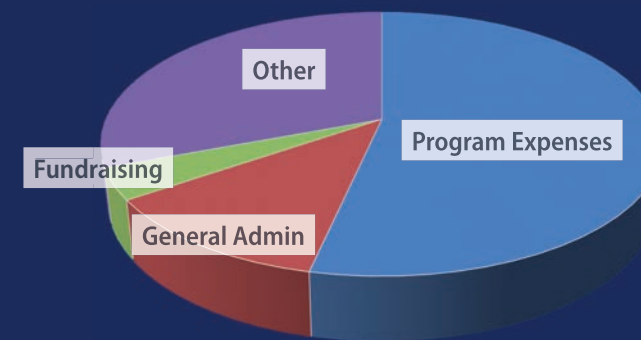
Kathy
Kathy Higgins
Board Chair

Judith
Judith I. Ham
President and CEO

FINANCIAL INFORMATION



Revenues	
Program	5,077,814
Contributions/Fundraising	1,848,815
Donation Services	427,699
Other	2,961,227
Total Revenue	10,315,555



Expenses	
Program Expenses	5,850,401
General Admin	1,308,376
Fundraising	420,941
Other	3,366,835
Total Expenses	10,946,553*

*Included is 1,356,743 in depreciation expenses



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Judith I. Ham
Ability Connection Colorado, Inc.

OUR VISION:

To live in a community that includes, accepts, and celebrates the abilities and contributions of all individuals.

OUR MISSION:

To support Coloradans through innovative and comprehensive early childhood education, employment, and family support programs.

INCLUSION:

The action or state of including or of being included within a group. At ACCO, we recognize the inherent worth and value of each person and the resulting empowerment and dignity that comes from their inclusion in life, education, work and community.

