

# A Word From the Executive Director



Dear Friends and Family of Third Way Center,

Happy 2026!

"True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice." —  
**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

As we start 2026, the landscape for kids in residential care in Colorado is changing rapidly. Our state is transitioning deeper into a managed care system, designed to streamline services and manage costs. While the goal is "sustainability," the reality is often a maze. For a child or family in crisis, a "managed" system can feel like a "closed" system—one that leaves them missing the one thing they need most: an advocate.

When we talk about ***National Poverty Awareness Month***, we must recognize that poverty isn't just a lack of money; it is a lack of *leverage and opportunity*. In a complicated, bureaucratic system, kids without family, a social worker, or a dedicated support person often fall through the cracks of new regulations and service caps.

This is where Dr. King's vision of justice meets our daily work. Justice for a youth in residential care isn't just a bed and a meal; it is the presence of a human being who knows their history, fights for their rights, and ensures the "managed care" actually results in *real care*. One of our most cherished values at Third Way Center is *Justice*. It's what makes all the difference and can lead to *trauma resolution*.

As Dr. King reminds us, peace only happens when we understand why and what we need to do about it. True peace for a child in the system is their ability to find their own *justice*. What helps is being with others who have similar experiences, with staff who understand how to evaluate, diagnose, and connect with these kids and their families. A system designed for healing rather than simply saving money.

This January, we aren't just hoping for "better times"; we are working to ensure that the system itself works so that every child's future is defined by their potential, not by the gaps in our social safety net.

We are incredibly grateful for our community of supporters who truly make a difference in the lives of Third Way Center's *not-so-lovable* teenagers.

With gratitude,

Renee