

A Word From the Executive Director



I'm new to my position, but not to Third Way Center!

On June 1st, 1986, I was hired fresh out of Graduate school as a primary therapist. It was competitive, there were not many jobs out there, and I was thrilled! A little bit scared, but thrilled. At the time, I was asked for a two-year commitment, which seemed like a long time, but it also made sense given the nature of the job. The kids at Third Way need staff who are dedicated, consistent, and willing to do whatever it takes. As a therapist, the first year is the most difficult, and I was warned- and everything they said was true, no glamor, no glitz, just messy adolescents. It wasn't until the 2nd year that I began to understand the depth of the job. What it means to stick with these kids, to make mistakes, to be part of a team, to see the value in helping to make changes with these incredibly resilient yet damaged human beings and their families. It's intense. And, believe it or not, our clients are not always grateful and may even be a little hostile at times. Learning to see beyond the behavior, understand what these kids need, and recognize the why was incredibly powerful for everyone. That process has never changed and is just as powerful today as it was yesterday. The kids in placement are that .01% of the population who cost the most and need the most care.

In my humble beginnings, there was only one program: York. The staff was small; it included Hildegard (Dr. Messenbaugh, our founder and leader) and David Eisner, the Executive Director until just recently. I was fortunate to begin when I did, because the program grew organically as the needs for Colorado children became more complex. We were always known for treating the older adolescents, the really hard-to-serve adolescents. With Hildegard's guidance, we understood that children needed to belong and live in neighborhoods. The programs needed to work like households; they needed to cook and clean, have chores, and learn how to talk about their problems. We quickly understood that they needed a step before emancipating, so Lincoln was developed. What makes Lincoln so unique and wonderful is that it is a true treatment program, allowing the residents to live in an apartment that they manage, be alone, and eat popcorn for dinner if they want, with lots of therapeutic support. Lowry was developed because all the psych hospitals were closing. Some kids with severe mental health issues still need that structure sometimes, hopefully not all the time. All of our programs evolve as the needs change, but the foundation of true mental health services is about

individualized, intensive, relational, diagnostic work towards trauma resolution. It is about truth and hope.

The staff are truly amazing, and I am so fortunate to have this opportunity to continue to do this unbelievable, life-changing work! Third Way is not new to me, but being the Executive Director is. I am again thrilled.