

A Word From the Executive Director



Dear friends and family of Third Way Center,

Happy June

June 1, 1986. Forty years ago today, I began my journey as a therapist at Third Way Center. It was a simpler era of lean, fiercely dedicated teams where the golden rule was absolute: the kids always came first. We operated out of a single house with 16 kids, anchored by a tight-knit team who worked until the job was done.

At the heart of that foundational era was our brilliant founder, **Dr. Hildegard Messenbaugh**, whom we lost this past January, as you may know. She would have turned 86 this month. Hildegard was an absolute force of nature. Even while managing other psychiatric adolescent units and running a full private practice, she never wavered—she was there for our Friday morning meetings, anchoring our team with her unmatched grit, wisdom, and deep understanding of trauma resolution. I always felt like I was entering group therapy. Her pioneering spirit laid the bricks for who we are today, and her legacy continues to guide our mission. We must always remember why we are here.

As we look forward, a renewed sense of hope is in the air. We are currently preparing for the **Bannock ribbon-cutting**—a monumental milestone that represents the next chapter of our growth. An opportunity for Third Way Center to treat 12 to 14 more adolescents with complex mental health needs. This expansion has garnered vital bipartisan political support from the offices of Weiser, Bennet, Kirkmeyer, and Crow, proving that the mental health of our youth transcends political lines; it is a shared community responsibility. We will see who shows up, but they have all responded, because adolescent mental health is important. With a new administration, fresh opportunities are becoming possible.

For over 50 years, our community of supporters has made this work possible. The bottom line remains unchanged: **treatment is what changes lives.** True healing cannot be rushed or shortcut. Many entities are trying to monitor our program, funding, and process, and we keep fighting back. Your commitment allows us to maintain our dedication to delivering what we know works. It is this support that empowers us to offer Colorado's most at-risk youth an honest path toward healing.

June Observances & The Spirit of Summer

As we step into the warmth of summer, we also ground ourselves in the meaningful recognitions this month brings to our community:

- **Pride Month:** A time to celebrate diversity and reinforce our commitment to ensuring that Third Way Center remains a safe, inclusive, and affirming environment where every single teenager feels valued and supported.

- **National PTSD Awareness Month:** A deeply relevant focus for our trauma-informed care, honoring the resilience of those healing from deep-seated trauma and rewiring the brain for a brighter future.
- **Juneteenth (June 19):** A landmark celebration of freedom, community resilience, and historical reflection.

Summer is officially here. Let us carry Hildegard's fierce dedication, our deep appreciation for our donors, and our collective hope into this next chapter of

life-changing care.

With gratitude and appreciation,

Renee