

A Word From the Executive Director



A Note from the Executive Director: Finding Stability in an Unstable World

Dear Friends and Family of Third Way Center,
Happy November.

As autumn deepens and the year draws to a close, our thoughts naturally turn to gratitude and hope. Yet, here at Third Way Center, we are acutely aware that for the vulnerable youth we serve, these feelings are often overshadowed by uncertainty and the harsh realities of a chaotic system.

Before looking ahead, it's vital to recognize the scope of the mission we uphold together:

- **Residential Care:** We currently serve 68 youth (ages 13–21) in our Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) and our Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP).
- **Bannock renovation:** Spring/Summer opening of our new program to serve 12-14 PRTF kids.
- **Transition & Independence:** We also provide stability for up to 23 young people (ages 17–21) in our Psychiatric Apartment Program and up to 10 kids in our essential Aftercare Program.
- **Education:** We maintain our commitment to specialized, continuous learning through our two dedicated schools, which educate only Third Way Center students.

Our daily work brings us face-to-face with the crazy, broken system for kids with complex mental health issues. The amount of oversight, audits, and billing possibilities that entities are continuously evolving. Kids and families dealing with severe trauma and complex mental health challenges are constantly navigating bureaucratic hurdles, and there continues to be more youth in need than there are beds to serve. The support of our community is the most powerful force fighting back against this instability.

In Colorado, our government is transitioning dedicated Child Welfare Medicaid funding to a managed care system run by Regional Accountability Entities (RAEs)—which are insurance companies incentivized not to spend the funds. This involves shifting Medicaid funding from a child-centered approach to a business-centered one. This started before the *'Big Beautiful Bill.'*

- **The Problem:** The July 1, 2026, deadline for this transition looms with chaos. There is much that is unknown, and systems that conflict with each other and with the needs of kids and their families. These insurance companies have complex payment structures that currently do not include support for families or youth over 17, a population in great need. The holistic approach to care is in jeopardy.
- **Our Fight:** We are committed to being a beacon of stability, continuing to treat the most vulnerable, and maintaining the quality of treatment we know works. This RAE transition poses a threat to the continuity of care and the financial viability of therapeutic programs like ours. We are actively advocating to ensure that kids most in need get what they need.

I want to thank everyone who supported True Grit on October 18th. Your generosity didn't just raise funds; it sent an undeniable message of worth and stability to every young person in our care. Every dollar is an investment in the resilience and future of our youth. Your presence and contributions demonstrate the true spirit of community.

In this season of reflection, and in the spirit of True Grit, we were honored to recognize Gary Gray at True Grit for his unwavering service to the Third Way Center Board of Directors, our mission, and the kids and families of Third Way Center. His commitment and heart embody the long-term dedication needed to build resilience and foster real change in our youth's lives.

As we move through November, we also pause to recognize several important narratives that directly impact our mission:

- **Youth Homelessness Awareness Month** underscores the fundamental necessity of the safe, therapeutic housing TWC provides. For our youth, stability is not a luxury—it is the foundation for healing.
- **Native American Heritage Month** allows us to honor the resilience, wisdom, and rich culture of Indigenous peoples, a trait we strive to foster in every young person on their journey to self-determination.
- **Veterans Day** and **Thanksgiving** call us to reflect on service, sacrifice, and the profound gift of community that makes our work possible.

As we embrace the holiday season, it is important to recognize that some are reminded of what they do not have. The holiday season can bring up feelings of isolation, traumatic memories, harsh realities, and profound grief, especially for those with complicated family relationships. It can also be a place and time to deal with those feelings, challenge thoughts, and find ways to heal through voice, choice, and justice. We ask our community to approach this season with an extra layer of **kindness, flexibility, and awareness** of the hidden struggles that many young people face, especially during uncertain times.

Holiday Hope is a way to contribute by providing tangible gifts for a youth at Third Way Center during the holidays. See below for more details.

Thank you for standing with us and supporting our most vulnerable, however resilient, youth. If we take care of our youth now, they may achieve great things in the future.

With gratitude,

Renee