

# A Word From the Executive Director



Greetings, Third Way Center friends and family!

I've been the Executive Director for 10 months. It's been a crazy ride so far, mostly due to the many changes in our child welfare system, which is difficult to navigate. The system is divisive and often gets in the way of treating kids.

Third Way Center works with the most vulnerable youth and their families. We serve 87 kids between the ages of 13 and 20 across a continuum of care (four distinct programs) throughout the Denver community. We also have our own schools and an aftercare program. What makes it all work is the continuous therapy. Our therapists work alongside the mental health counselors, the recreation coordinators, the voc/ed team, the medical team, and the school to provide individualized mental health treatment. It is a team effort. If we are all working together, we can't lose.

When I started in 1986, we only had the York facility. We also only had 4 therapists, a recreation counselor, and overnight staff. The holidays were truly one for all and all for one. If the residents had nowhere to go for the holidays, we took them home with us. I have to admit, I enjoyed those times. It was authentic, and there was a sense of belonging.

However, holidays are not very fun for many people. For kids in care, it can be complicated. For the staff as well. There can be memories, and for some, holidays bring up who we miss and what we don't have. Our staff recognizes the need for recognition, support, consistency, and process. It helps to be purposeful and to give some control over their own rituals going forward.

We have a graduation to look forward to. It is a highlight of working at Third Way Center. The residents always feel so proud of themselves. Our keynote speaker is Dominique Mallard, a Third Way Center alumnus and now an advocate for foster care youth. She was not an easy resident, but well worth the effort. I am proud of her. She will do a wonderful job celebrating the graduates!

Remember Third Way Center on this ***Giving Tuesday!*** Our residents always benefit from your generosity!

Wishing you and yours a peaceful, grateful, safe holiday season,

*Renee*