



**THE  
COLORADO  
TRUST**

*A Health Equity Foundation*

# 2019 *Review*

## Message from Leadership

April 2020

**On behalf of The Colorado Trust**

**Board of Trustees and staff, we are proud  
to share this overview of grantmaking  
and other foundation activities from 2019.**

Entertainment at a Sheridan Rising Together for Equity resident team meeting in Sheridan, Colo. The team is working with The Trust as part of the Community Partnerships strategy.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Building power is foundational to creating healthier communities. And people know their own communities best—both the great things about living there, as well as the challenges that need addressing in order for everyone in the community to lead healthy, productive lives.

These elements are at the heart of The Trust’s Community Partnerships strategy, which marked its fifth year in 2019. We are proud to support people who are building collective power by coming together, working to identify and implement solutions that create thriving communities for themselves and their neighbors—especially among people who have historically experienced the most hardships and marginalization. We are currently working with communities in more than 20 locations across the state (please [consult the map](#) on our Community Partnerships page to learn more about where this work is underway).

Power is built when people have a platform to raise their voice, tell their story and discuss the change they want to see in their community. Lived experiences, expertise and voices of those who are directly impacted by injustices are central to the process. The Community Partnerships strategy now has many examples of this playing out across Colorado:

- A team of people living in the city of Sheridan decided that in order for their schools to be as strong as possible, educators needed to embrace the diversity of their student body. So they began advocating for curriculum changes, brought language-justice practices to the school board meetings, and several even decided to run for local offices. Multiple members of this resident team now sit on the Sheridan school board.
- In the San Luis Valley town of Saguache, residents were concerned that their rural economy was foundering. In 2019, their idea of promoting business education took off with an entrepreneurship track at the local high school, and a career fair that brought in businesses from throughout the region.
- In a neighborhood in Pueblo, another one in Colorado Springs, and in the Eastern Plains town of Yuma, people responded to food insecurity in their communities



Sheridan, Colo.



Saguache, Colo.



Pueblo, Colo.

with simple yet impactful ideas: A mobile food bank, a regular senior luncheon, and a small neighborhood building stocked with food, open at all hours to any comer. This, too, is power.

We encourage you to watch these 2019 videos from the Fountain and Battlement Mesa area ([Grand Valley](#)) as well as [Saguache](#), both of which further illustrate the Community Partnerships work and progress in these communities.

## HEALTH EQUITY ADVOCACY

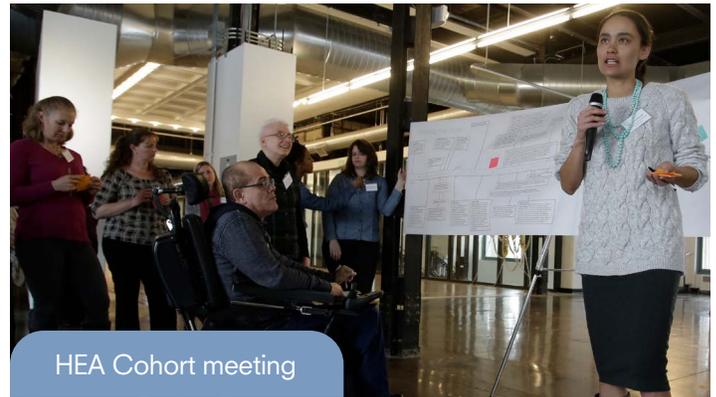
The [HEA strategy](#), which marked its sixth year in 2019, focuses on advocating for policies that end racial, economic and other injustices that impact the health and well-being of all Coloradans. The Trust continued work with the 18 grantees—known collectively as the HEA Cohort—to reduce silos, maximize resources and incorporate diverse voices, all intended to shift power dynamics and create health equity-aligned policy change.

Through a leadership and engagement structure established by Cohort members to oversee their collective work, the Cohort sponsored numerous capacity-building activities in 2019, including nine communications workshops and trainings to build communications capacity; 11 political education sessions (270+ attendees overall) to help community members understand and identify root causes of health and racial inequities; and 30 racial equity trainings and community conversations (500+ attendees overall) intended to build theoretical understanding of racial equity and integrate equity practices into work and personal interactions.

To further their collective capacity for change and align their health equity advocacy efforts, Cohort members and partners developed numerous tools to support Cohort organizations' engagement in advocacy around several housing bills in the 2019 legislative session. A Colorado Health Institute report, [Home Equity: A Vision of Housing Security, Health and Opportunity](#), was also commissioned to guide future policy advocacy efforts for a more equitable housing system in Colorado.

2019 marked the end of the network partnership grants, through which Cohort members diversified the health equity advocacy field by providing funding to 56 partner organizations. Cohort members and network partners came together during three multi-day convenings in Aurora (February), Colorado Springs (June) and Westminster (October). These convenings provided space for networking, learning and planning together.

Cohort members have long used evaluation to modify and adapt the HEA strategy, and the strategy's external evaluator, Social Policy Research Associates, produced two such learning papers in 2019. The first, [Centering Race in](#)



HEA Cohort meeting

[Health Equity Advocacy](#), detailed how the Cohort decided to center race in their work and the multilevel framework they used to guide their capacity-building activities. Findings from this paper were shared with members of Grantmakers for Effective Organizations via a [blog post](#), webinar and member calls. The second, [Shifting the Paradigm in Colorado](#), told the story of how the Cohort organizations experimented with ways to align their health equity advocacy efforts and take collective action.

## HEALTH EQUITY LEARNING SERIES

As part of our vision to create healthier communities across Colorado, we host an annual speaker series and provide grants to a diverse set of community organizations in order to increase knowledge of how systemic oppression can impact health.

Talks in Denver, featuring speakers from across the country, are recorded and [posted to our website](#) in both video and podcast format. Additionally, we work closely with nonprofit organizations around the state to host free, in-person presentations of these recordings in their communities that also include professionally facilitated discussions. We believe everyone should have the right to learn and communicate in the language with which they feel most comfortable, so we provide translation and interpretation services as needed.

We hosted two speakers in 2019. In January, [Taté Walker](#) presented on the violence and marginalization faced by Indigenous womxn, and the policies that perpetuate



Taté Walker



Andrea Cristina Mercado

historical traumas. (Walker intentionally used the term "womxn" to be inclusive and reject patriarchy in language by removing "men" as the root of "women.") Walker, who is Lakota and a citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe of South Dakota, is an Indigenous rights activist and award-winning multimedia storyteller. Then in May, [Andrea Cristina Mercado](#), executive director of New Florida Majority and the New Florida Majority Education Fund, shared her experiences organizing alongside women in immigrant and low-income communities, and moving hearts and minds to reimagine what is possible.

## COMMUNITY LEADERS IN HEALTH EQUITY

We were so proud of the more than 70 people who comprised the first graduating class of our [Community Leaders in Health Equity](#) program. Six grantee organizations supported and provided resources to 12-15 people each, so that these individuals could take part in an intensive 18-month curriculum focused on the ways that systemic oppression—such as racism, sexism,



CLHE graduates

classism and nationalism—came to be and continues today. The curriculum included multi-day convenings, workshops, ongoing project work and more, all with a goal of training participants to build power to create change and improve lives in their own communities.

Our second class of grantees and participants in this program will get underway in 2020, and we're excited to learn from and with them. [Click here to learn more](#) about the Community Leaders in Health Equity program and its early achievements.

## COLORADO EQUITY COMPASS

In 2019, we partnered with The Piton Foundation's [Shift Research Lab](#) on a two-year pilot initiative to create a web-based portal, featuring summary and analysis of social determinants of health in our state. This open-data

platform—which is both quantitative and qualitative—will feature Colorado-focused, community-level health equity indicators, and bring to life the experiences of residents in communities experiencing injustices, utilizing both personal stories and reliable data. It's currently [being piloted in four Colorado communities](#), and we look forward to sharing learnings with you a year or so from now.

## STORIES, REPORTS & OTHER INFORMATION

We have long believed it is essential to provide information and resources to Coloradans that extend beyond funding. That's why we published 40 original stories on health equity topics in 2019; we encourage you to read them at our online [newsroom](#). We continue to translate every story (as well as the rest of our website, social media and email newsletter content) into Spanish.

The most-read stories in English from 2019 included a look at how one Denver high school has pioneered a [new approach to teaching](#) teenagers with histories of trauma; why one chain of supermarkets [keeps closing its Colorado locations](#), creating food deserts in the process; the variables that help [predict whether a neighborhood will gentrify](#); and how midwifery, a typically lower-cost form of maternity care, has [become increasingly inaccessible](#) with the closing of several practices.

Among our Spanish-speaking readers, popular articles were about [efforts to address homelessness](#) in Denver; [students marching for stricter gun-control laws](#); and the [history of unequal access to parks](#) in the metro area. We also continued our Advance: Health Equity Stories series with mini-documentaries on [mental health challenges](#) among rural Colorado farmers and ranchers, and the [disparate impacts of oil and gas drilling](#) along race and socioeconomic lines.

As part of our commitment to transparency, we always publish our [financial reports](#) on our website, including

complete [audited statements](#) and [federal tax returns](#). We have numerous Trust-authored and/or supported [reports and publications](#), and we share new [evaluation findings](#) as they become available. You can search our [grants database](#) to review past and current funding commitments beyond the core strategies described above. Our 2019 financial information will be available on our website in the summer of 2020.

On behalf of everyone on our staff and board, thank you for your continued interest in our work towards all Coloradans having opportunities to live healthy, productive lives.



*Colleen Schwarz*  
Colleen Schwarz  
2019 Chair, Board of Trustees



*Ned Calonge MD*  
Ned Calonge, MD, MPH  
President & CEO

### Photo credits:

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