



DEEPENING OUR ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT THROUGHOUT COLORADO

A plan sitting on a shelf has no purpose. People bring it to life.

The Women's Foundation updated our strategic plan in 2017. Deepening our engagement and impact statewide is an important goal. Dottie Lamm, a WFCO founding mother and former First Lady of Colorado, emphasized the need for a statewide focus when we launched in 1987, and it has remained a cornerstone of our unique community foundation ever since.

From the rolling prairies of Eastern Colorado to our purple mountain majesties, the women and families in our state are as varied as the landscapes. Women in rural areas have less access to job training and livable wage careers. Latinas face the greatest income disparities. Immigrant women are less likely than U.S.-born women to hold high school diplomas. Women veterans, especially those with disabilities, and their family members often need to adjust to a new normal.

Yes, many hard-working women face challenges, but we see them as community assets who can make even greater contributions to the future of our state and their families – if barriers are removed systemically and holistically.

Our statewide strategies require continual adjusting as demographics, economies, and opportunities change and grow. In 2019, we are taking bold steps and adding resources to embed The Women's Foundation in communities statewide more authentically. We will:

- Focus on listening, learning, community building, and advocacy to cultivate and inspire passionate supporters.
- Bolster our infrastructure with a full-time statewide engagement manager to lead WFCO's community education and advocacy efforts, connect volunteers with our Denver-based team, and inspire more robust and diverse participation in communities beyond Metro Denver.

- Add three part-time employees in Southern Colorado, Northern Colorado, and the Vail Valley to guide and support our regional committees.
- Explore new statewide research strategies to steer our grantmaking and nonpartisan public policy efforts as well as inform legislators, nonprofits, businesses, and government agencies.
- Identify additional opportunities, such as our Greater Vail Valley Women's Fund, to involve more communities in strategic, regional grantmaking efforts.

My commitment is also personal. As a storyteller, I am energized and motivated by the inspirational stories of the diverse women across our state who make their way out of no way – each and every day. I will conduct site visits with direct-service grantees across the state to better understand how The Women's Foundation and our community of giving can improve economic opportunities. I will share those stories broadly to cultivate philanthropy and power prosperity for the women across Colorado.

Our foundation was built on the shoulders of generous donors and dedicated volunteers in communities across our state. Likewise, our strategies touch every woman in Colorado. Whether you reside in Fort Morgan or Fort Garland, you belong and have a home at our unique statewide community foundation.

Learn more about the opportunities for engagement inside this newsletter.



LAUREN Y. CASTEEL
President & CEO

SIX NEW TRUSTEES JOIN DIVERSE BOARD OF WOMEN AND MEN

Six women joined WFCO's board of trustees on April 1, 2019. The trustees represent the diverse backgrounds and identities of the women who make up the state of Colorado and bring our board total to 25.



Michelle Blessing, *Colorado Springs*

As an associate broker for ERA Shields, Michelle is a top real estate agent locally and nationally. She has extensive nonprofit board experience, including the Discover Goodwill Foundation, The Children's Literacy Center, and The Rocky Mountain Women's Film Institute.



Sue Sharkey, *Castle Rock*

Sue has served on the CU Board of Regents since 2010, representing the 4th Congressional District. She was elected to serve as chair for the board of regents in 2017 and 2018. She is interested in military-connected students as well as CU's pre-collegiate program serving first-generation, underserved high school students.



Gracie Gallego, *Denver*

Gracie is the assistant vice president and business development specialist for Heritage Title Company, earning the title of top sales executive for the past five years. She served on the board of the Hispanic Chamber Foundation from 2009-2015.



Danielle Shoots, *Denver*

Danielle Shoots is the founder and CEO of the Daily Boss Up, a digital startup that provides coaching, mentoring, and consulting for leaders. She is also an accomplished financial executive. Danielle serves as the president of the board for Mile High Ministries.



Kendra M. Oyen, *Pueblo*

Kendra is an attorney and owns her own firm, Kendra M. Oyen, LLC. Before earning her J.D. at the University of Colorado School of Law, she was a Boettcher Scholar at Colorado College. Kendra has served on boards of Pueblo Domestic Violence Task Force, Sangre de Cristo Hospice, and the Western Colorado AIDS Project.



Faye Tate, *Denver*

Faye Tate is the vice president of diversity and inclusion at CoBank. She sits on the national board of directors for the Arc of the United States; is a member of The Links, Inc. Denver Chapter and the Denver Alumnae Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc; and received The Paul R. Hunter Award from the Colorado Human Rights Campaign.



From left to right: Mallory Garner-Wells, Erica Jackson, Mariana Diaz



Meet Our Team!

The Women's Foundation of Colorado welcomes three new employees:

Mariana Diaz, programs coordinator;
Mallory Garner-Wells, statewide engagement manager; and **Erica Jackson**, digital marketing specialist.

GOOD NEWS AND THANK YOUS

- **Barbara Bridges** – honorary trustee, fundholder, Beyond Our Borders member, and Pearl PEP member – and PEP member **Jill Tietjen, P.E.** released their book, “Hollywood: Her Story, An Illustrated History of Women at the Movies.”
- **Lauren Y. Casteel**, WFCO president and CEO, delivered the keynote at MSU Denver’s spring commencement ceremony.
- **Kami Guildner**, trustee and PEP member, recorded the 100th episode of her Extraordinary Women Radio podcast.
- Donor-advised fundholder **Sue Kamler** was honored with the Marge Cashman Spirit of Service Award at Maria Droste’s Spring Blossoms Gala.
- Thank you, **Patti Klinge** and **Trish Orman**, our newest honorary trustees, for your service on our board and your commitment to women’s progress!
- **Colleen LaFontaine**, WFCO director of development, and **Krissy Vaio**, development officer and events manager, crossed the finish lines of the Newport and Colfax marathons, respectively.
- **Jennifer Leitsch**, PEP member and fundholder, was named to the 2019 Environment + Energy Leader 100 list.



Photo: Aly McClaran

- **Claire Levy**, executive director of WFCO grantee partner Colorado Center on Law and Policy, has stepped down after more than five years in the role. Thank you for your leadership and partnership!
- Honorary Trustee **Betsy Mangone** has been welcomed into the National Association of Charitable Gift Planners Hall of Fame.
- Donor-advised fundholder and Vail Valley regional committee member **Karen Maxwell** was inducted into the University of Kentucky College of Engineering’s Hall of Distinction.
- **Marissa Molina**, WFCO 2017 policy fellow and “Dreamer,” was appointed to the MSU board of trustees.
- PEP member **Shahira Niggin Quadrat** published a book, “Authenticity in America: A Memoir of Rebellion & Dual Identities.”
- **Danielle Shoots**, trustee and PEP member, was named one of 12 influential moms by *Colorado Parent* magazine and a top-25 most powerful woman by the Colorado Women’s Chamber of Commerce.
- PEP member **Dr. Nita Mosby Tyler** has been named the 2019 9News Leader of the Year.
- The *Denver Business Journal* named PEP member and donor-advised fundholder **Shanda Vangas** as a top woman in energy. Past WFCO luncheon speakers and Xcel Energy executives **Hollie Velasquez Horvath**, **Alice Jackson**, and **Kynn timer Martin** also made the list.
- Honorary Trustee and The Community Chest giving circle member **Marla Williams** retired from Community First Foundation after 8 years as president and CEO.
- Congratulations to the 31 graduates of **Florence Crittenton Services**, WFCO grantee partner, whose mission is to educate, prepare, and empower teen mothers and their children to become productive members of the community.



Photo: Timeless Photos by Dana

A GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

Meet WFCO's Four Giving Circles

Since WFCO announced in 2018 our new giving circle, Sisterhood of Philanthropists Impacting Needs (SPIN), community response has been a gift that keeps giving. Several more have launched, will launch soon, or are in initial planning phases.

For decades, giving circles have provided like-minded donors a space to multiply their philanthropy by pooling their dollars, deciding where to give the money, and learning together about community, philanthropy, and impact.

"As a philanthropic institution, developing new giving vehicles is an important part of WFCO's current strategic plan," said Renee Ferruffino, vice president of development. "Giving circles make philanthropy more accessible and connect donors to new

communities. They also allow The Foundation to touch more issues and have greater impact."

Renee notes that giving circles are perfect for regional or affinity groups, such as the members who make up The Community Chest – a group of friends who survived the challenges of breast cancer.

"Having The Women's Foundation host our giving circle was a no-brainer," said Ruth Rohs, co-founder of The Community Chest. "It was important to us that WFCO was founded by women for women."

Each separate giving circle makes group decisions about whether to co-invest with The Foundation or fund other interest areas, as well as minimum financial contributions, requirements for membership, and processes for grantmaking.

BEYOND OUR BORDERS

Beyond Our Borders has been a group-advised fund held at The Women's Foundation of Colorado since 2000 and is also considered a giving circle. Beyond Our Borders promotes equity and social justice through educational, economic, and social opportunities for women and girls in global settings. There are currently 38 members.

Membership: Members donate at least \$2,000 per year, or if they are under age 40, at least \$1,000 per year. Accepting new members.

THE COMMUNITY CHEST

In May 2019, The Community Chest was started by nine women who survived the challenges of breast cancer diagnoses and who want to share their strength, thankfulness, and desire to build a more connected and empowered Denver community for women and girls. The founding members include: Christine Benero, Jen Darling, Kathryn Harris, Lisa Hill, Kasia Iwaniczko-MacLeod, Sarah Lehmann, Ruth Rohs, Tamra Ward, and Marla Williams.

Membership: Members donate \$1,000 annually. Accepting new members and donations. Breast cancer survivorship is not required.



The founding members of The Community Chest.

Photo: McLeod9 Creative

SPIN

SPIN is an African-American women's giving circle empowering and positively impacting marginalized women and girls in our community. There are currently 11 members.

Membership: Members donate at least \$400 per year. To learn more, contact Co-Chair LaRae Scott-Jennings, lscottjennings@gmail.com.



Members of SPIN build on the tradition of African-American philanthropy.

Photo: Flor Blake

WOMEN'S IMPACT INVESTING GIVING CIRCLE (WIIGC)

The Women's Impact Investing Giving Circle is the first giving circle in the country to invest directly in women entrepreneurs. Impact Finance Center is partnering with WFCO to offer members education in governance, social ventures, due diligence, and deal creation. There are currently 19 members who will select the chair(s) at their first meeting on July 10, 2019.

Membership: Members donate \$2,000 or more per year. Accepting new members until July 8, 2019.

Interested in any of WFCO's giving circles or starting your own? Contact Kristina Vaio, development officer and events manager, at kristinav@wfc.org or 303-285-2967.

WFCO is matching every new giving circle opened in 2019 with \$2,500.

EXPANDING DONOR IMPACT THROUGH GENDER-LENS INVESTING



AKASHA ABSHER
is the chief consulting officer of Syntinsic Investment Counsel, leading the firm's efforts to create enduring strategic partnerships with nonprofit clients to help them invest all resources with

mission and business strategy. Syntinsic is WFCO's investment advisor. Akasha is a WFCO fundholder, PEP member, and Women Will member.

Q: What is unique about opening a donor-advised fund at WFCO?

A: What's great about WFCO is it provides donor-advised fundholders (DAF) two options to invest alongside it in its gender-lens investment platform: a long-term portfolio, which is well-diversified with a 15 percent gender-lens allocation, and the 100 percent gender-lens portfolio, which no other community foundation in Colorado offers.

Q: What is gender-lens investing?

A: Gender-lens investing is a form of impact investing, which is investing with the intent of both a financial and measurable, beneficial, social return. The folks at the Global Impact Investing Network define gender-lens investing as strategies that are applied to an allocation or to the entirety of an investment portfolio that seek to intentionally and measurably address gender disparities and/or examine gender dynamics to better inform investment decisions.

Q: Why should a donor-advised fundholder consider investing in WFCO's 100 percent gender-lens portfolio?

A: Investing alongside WFCO in the gender-lens investing program supports WFCO in achieving its top priorities. More specifically, through their investment dollars, donors will advocate for equal pay, family-friendly work policies, and gender diversity on corporate boards and executive management. They will

also support companies that are "best in class" based on scoring for issues such as climate change, human capital and labor management, corporate governance, privacy, data security, among others.

Q: What are WFCO's investment goals?

A: WFCO is broadening its gender-lens investment strategies while giving donors even more options to expand their impact. WFCO's goal is to use all forms of capital from investments to grantmaking for greater social and economic change for women statewide. The aim is for the entire asset base to be 51 percent gender-lens invested by spring 2021.

Q: How can donors participate in gender-lens investing?

A: Learn more! Donors can become involved in gender-lens investment options by opening a donor-advised fund or joining a giving circle or group-advised fund at WFCO. Contact Renee Ferrufino, vice president of development, at 303-285-2969 or reneef@wfco.org.

Living Her Values Through Women Will

"Values are important, but we need to act them out, not just know what they are," said **Jean Saul**, a member of WFCO's planned giving program, Women Will. Jean's sentiments align with an inspirational phrase often heard from WFCO President and CEO Lauren Y. Casteel, also a Women Will member: seek substance over symbols.

Wanting to substantiate her own values of sharing, kindness, and encouraging others prompted Jean to include The Women's Foundation of Colorado in her estate plans.

She developed a passion for the advancement of women in graduate school and soon began teaching women's studies. That passion fully bloomed when she worked for an organization dedicated to women's learning and action in the U.S. and globally. She hopes her planned gift will increase women's representation, power, and agency in all areas of larger society.

"In all probability, my money will outlast me, and I know this work will not be finished," she said. "Women need to be equal in all things — pay, education, and policymaking. It's a great relief to know I can be a small part of helping things continue."



» **Women Will** members plan gifts or requests to fund the essential work of The Women's Foundation through their estates. You may name WFCO as a beneficiary of IRAs, retirement plans, life insurance policies, marketable securities, and real property. To learn more, contact Renee Ferrufino, vice president of development, at 303-285-2969 or reneef@wfco.org.

TWO SPEAKERS, MANY STORIES, ONE VISION

Together, we can create a future where women of every background and identity thrive. Attend WFCO's Annual Luncheon on Friday, Oct. 11, 2019.

WFCO's Annual Luncheon is a renowned community showcase of icons, ideas, and stories and has grown to become the state's largest fundraising event on behalf of Colorado women and their families.

The event will draw nearly 2,600 passionate attendees and more than 200 sponsors to raise critical funds for WFCO's strategic statewide research, public policy advocacy, and grantmaking to help Colorado women reach economic security. **Tickets, tables, and sponsorships are available now at www.wfco.org/luncheon.**

Guests will be treated to a new luncheon format: two dynamic speakers, Noor Tagouri and Maysoon Zayid, will deliver heartfelt and humorous personal stories about their lived

experiences in TED-style talks that will connect and inspire the audience. Then, WFCO President and CEO Lauren Y. Casteel will host a joint conversation with both speakers.

"The Women's Foundation is thrilled to have Noor and Maysoon catalyze community, philanthropy, and impact through their poignant storytelling," said Lauren. "Bringing both speakers represents our belief that it takes inclusive stories and voices to inspire a future where women of every background and identity thrive. Our luncheon is a space where individuals from all sectors of the community come together each year with a common goal of fueling that future for our mothers, daughters, sisters, colleagues, and neighbors."



Noor Tagouri

Noor Tagouri is a prominent Muslim-American woman, blazing a trail across mainstream media. In 2018, Noor released the documentary "Sold in America," investigating the sex trade in the U.S., with a podcast spinoff climbing to #8 on Apple's Podcast Charts. In 2017, Noor released her Hulu series "A Woman's Job," highlighting badass women in male-dominated careers. Noor has been featured at SXSW, TEDx, Create & Cultivate, and New York Fashion Week. Noor's influence can be summed-up in two words: innovative storytelling. Noor Tagouri is, quite literally, changing the face of journalism – one story at a time.



Maysoon Zayid

Maysoon Zayid is an actress, comedian, writer, and disability advocate. She is a guest comedian in residence at Arizona State University and the co-founder/co-executive producer of the New York Arab American Comedy Festival and The Muslim Funny Fest. She was an on-air contributor to "Countdown with Keith Olbermann" and a columnist for The Daily Beast, appearing on Oprah Winfrey Network's "In Deep Shift", "60 Minutes", and ABC News. Maysoon had the number-one TED Talk of 2014. She walked in New York Fashion Week and is an ambassador for the Cerebral Palsy Foundation. Maysoon is currently developing a comedy series called "Can-Can."

2019 ANNUAL LUNCHEON

Friday, October 11, 2019 • 11:30 AM

Colorado Convention Center – Denver, CO
Mile High Ballroom

many
STORIES

one
VISION

Purchase tables and tickets today at wfco.org/luncheon

Overheard at 2018 Annual Luncheon...



"It made my spirit soar!"

"They've inspired me to make change and to help in any way I can."

"The Women's Foundation of Colorado is doing absolutely amazing things to help women!"



"I think we're better and more powerful in numbers, so it's great to come together and work together, and build a network."



"This is a big event now, but each one has been inspiring."



Top-3 reasons to sponsor our Annual Luncheon

1. You will demonstrate community leadership and commitment to building a brighter future for Colorado.
2. You will be in good company among Colorado's community and civic leaders, business leaders, nonprofits, corporations, and individual donors who are passionate about making a difference.
3. An investment in Colorado women is an investment in their children, families, communities, workplaces, and our economy!

Visit wfco.org/luncheon to learn more about sponsorships.

2019 Annual Luncheon Sponsors*

PRESENTING SPONSOR



PLATINUM SPONSORS



GOLD SPONSORS



SILVER SPONSORS

Mary and George Sissel





Colorado Gov. Jared Polis signs the Equal Pay for Equal Work Act at WFCO's offices on May 22, 2019.

A WIN FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

The 2019 Colorado legislative session will be remembered for many things, including an unprecedented female-majority House and the first session under the leadership of a new governor. The Women's Foundation of Colorado will remember it for the traction made for women in the workplace.

WFCO supported 18 bills, 16 of which passed. We are proud that many of these policies earned bipartisan support, with recognition that they will positively impact Colorado women, families, and our economy.

Our Priority Policies Passed or Advanced!

WFCO dedicated lobbying resources to three bills that supported women in the workplace. All will be signed into law. We have supported iterations of the Equal Pay for Equal Work Act and FAMLI for many years and their passage and advancement in 2019 demonstrates that women's progress takes patience, persistence, and partnership. We're in it for the long haul.

Equal Pay for Equal Work Act

The Equal Pay for Equal Work Act is a major step forward for Colorado women and a solution that works for our entire state. Molded by input from employees and employers, it is among the most comprehensive equal pay protections in the country. It provides an unprecedented opportunity for Colorado women to be paid what they're worth.

FAMLI Family Medical Leave Insurance Program

The bill creates a family and medical leave implementation task force and calls for an analysis of options for administration of a paid leave insurance program. Although the bill shifted into an implementation study bill, WFCO is pleased with this progress. No prior paid family leave policy

in any form has advanced to this point. Colorado is on the way to implementing a safety net for women in the workplace (and all Colorado workers) to provide care to loved ones at critical times, seek necessary medical treatment, and remain employed, which helps employers retain a skilled workforce.

Child Care Educator Tax Credit

96 percent of early child care educators in Colorado are low-income working women who don't make enough to meet their basic needs despite being a vital segment of our workforce. Their inadequate pay contributes to a high turnover rate and instability in the child care industry, which in turn negatively affects the quality of care children experience and disrupts parents' employment. Keeping childhood educators in the field, with good pay, is key to providing high-quality education and care for Colorado kids.

There Is Work Still to Be Done

Each bill paves clear pathways toward economic security for more Colorado families, but there is more work to be done. The child care crisis in Colorado must be addressed on multiple levels. As the Equal Work for Equal Pay Act approaches implementation in January 2021, WFCO plans to be a resource for employees and employers. Lastly, we look forward to working alongside employees, employers, policy experts, economists, private insurers, and several other stakeholders to shape a viable future for FAMLI in Colorado.



Help advocate for WFCO's policy priorities. Email malloryg@wfc.org

FROM STUDENT LOANS TO CENSUS OUTREACH – PROMOTING PROSPERITY THROUGH POLICY

16 BILLS WE SUPPORTED PASSED

ELEVATING CHILD CARE

✓	HB 19-1005	Income Tax Credit for Certain Early Childhood Educators
✓	HB 19-1013	Income Tax Credit for Child Care Expenses
✓	HB 19-1052	Special Districts to Provide Early Childhood Development Services
✓	SB 19-063	Infant and Family Child Care Action Plan
✓	HB 19-1262	State Funding for Full-Day Program

MAKING WORK WORK

✓	HB 19-1210	Local Government Minimum Wage
✓	HB 19-2007	Employment Support Job Retention Services Program
✓	SB 19-085	Equal Pay for Equal Work Act
✓	SB 19-173	Colorado Secure Savings Plan Board
✓	SB 19-188	FAMLI Family Medical Leave Insurance Program (implementation study bill)

PROPELLING OPPORTUNITY

✓	SB 19-002	Regulation of Student Education Loan Servicers
✓	HB 19-1280	College Savings Accounts
✓	HB 19-1332	Expand Supply Affordable Housing

IMPROVING COLORADO'S TAX AND BUDGET POLICIES

✓	HB 19-1257	Voter Approval to Retrain Revenue for Education and Transportation
✓	HB 19-1258	Allocate Voter-approved Revenue for Education & Transportation

PROMOTING AND PROTECTING ISSUES AND RIGHTS

✓	HB 19-1239	Census Outreach Grant Program
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We don't do this work alone. Thank you to our statewide network of advocates, partners, funders, legislative champions, and supporters.

For more information about our legislative work and those who help move it forward, visit wfco.org/publicpolicy.

DOTTIE LAMM AWARD APPLICATIONS DUE JULY 12



WFCO 2018 Dottie Lamm Award Winner, Athena Clemens

Do you know a young woman who overcame challenging circumstances on her personal journey toward economic security? Help her win \$1,500. Applications are now open for the 2019 Dottie Lamm Leadership Award.

In addition to applicants, WFCO is also seeking volunteers to review applications.

Learn more at wfco.org/dottielammaward.

BE PART OF WFCO'S GRANTMAKING DECISIONS

WFCO is seeking additional direct service grantmaking committee members to serve a three-year term, beginning August 2019. The committee advises the WFCO board of trustees on grantmaking decisions regarding the direct-service grantee partners of our WAGES (Women Achieving Greater Economic Security) program. We are looking for members who:

- Represent communities across Colorado and reflect different social identities
- Have community knowledge and/or experience relevant to our focus area
- Demonstrate a passion for and interest in women reaching economic security
- Value diversity and inclusiveness

Learn more at wfco.org/volunteer.

A COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER FOR IMMIGRANT WORKING MOTHERS



The Morgan County Community Center, run by community building organization **OneMorgan**, is a vibrant and welcoming convening spot for Fort Morgan residents and organizations.

It opened in 2018 as a temporary “pop-up” resource for the immigrant, refugee, and asylee community; more than 19 percent of the town’s population is foreign born and 39 percent speaks a language other than English.

The concept flourished and morphed into a permanent resident-led community center offering adult English classes, citizenship classes, cultural events, and a safe space for students to gather after school.

Susana Guardano, executive director, arrived in Fort Morgan from Mexico when she was five years old. She believes her family may not have felt so isolated if the community center had existed then. She reinforces that the intercultural center is a necessary place for understanding, support, and friendship, but it’s also an economic driver for Fort Morgan.

Helping Immigrant Women Achieve Greater Economic Security

Six working mothers gather at OneMorgan bimonthly to chat about motherhood and matriculation and to offer support to one another.

They are part of The Women’s Foundation of Colorado’s WAGES program, which is comprised of 23 nonprofit organizations statewide that help increase women’s access to higher education, job training, equal pay, child care, and livable wages. OneMorgan’s program focuses on helping the mothers acquire degrees that will lead to professional advancement, and ultimately, economic security.

Morgan Community College generously covers their tuition and the support of career counselors. WFCO’s funding provides monthly stipends to offset the staggering

“The original intent of the space was to house a resource desk to address immigration concerns and needs. It’s evolved into a cohesive community center where all walks of life are welcomed.”

SUSANA GUARDANO
Executive Director, OneMorgan

costs of child care, transportation, books, and supplies that often are barriers to working mothers entering and staying in school. Susana and two other program coordinators – Eric Ishiwata, PhD, and Taylor Jordan – host career workshops and computer literacy trainings while addressing the linguistic, cultural, and social-emotional needs of working mothers from immigrant backgrounds.

Because of this targeted approach and support system, every participant finished her second semester and OneMorgan reports a 100-percent retention rate for fall semester.

SITINA'S STORY

Sitina, 25, came to Fort Morgan from Ethiopia in 2011 in tenth grade to join her brother who worked at Cargill Meat processing plant. She originally attended classes at Fort Morgan High School but withdrew so she could work full time to help cover her mother’s medical bills. Today, she’s a mom to one-year-old and five-year-old sons.

Finishing high school seemed unlikely to Sitina. When OneMorgan told her about the WAGES program, she jumped at a chance to earn her GED and take college courses simultaneously. She is on track to complete her GED at the end of 2019 and plans to enroll in a four-year college for nursing.

MARCELA'S STORY

Marcela, 22, immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico when she was 15. Despite thinking she “wasn’t going to make it” through high school because of the language barrier, she persevered and graduated. She attended college for one year, but when she had a child, she didn’t have the child care resources to keep going.

With OneMorgan’s WAGES program, Marcela is close to earning her Associate of Science degree, and plans to attend

a four-year college to pursue industrial engineering. She loves working with systems and logistics and enjoys the challenge of making the best possible use of resources. With her stipend, she can afford high-quality child care for her daughter, Samantha, who is almost three.

“Samantha has grown so much; she can already identify all her letters,” said Marcela proudly.

GLORIA'S STORY

At the potluck, Gloria, 38, sits with her daughters Lilia and Brenda, who attend University of Northern Colorado. She has four children – all in high school and college. Gloria wanted to take the next step for her future as well. She maintains her job as a breakfast attendant at a nearby hotel while the WAGES program allows her to work toward her associate degree in business administration. She dreams of opening her own Mexican restaurant and catering business.

During her first semester at Morgan Community College, Gloria earned a 4.0 GPA. She smiles as she talks about taking a class with her son and learning about career communication. She knows the information will be invaluable when she becomes a business owner.

“It’s been less than a year, and you can already see a change,” said Lilia of her mom. “I’m so excited to see her moving toward her goals.”

Did you know?

Morgan County’s demographics are rooted in its strong agri-business sector. Since the late 1890s, it has drawn many immigrant laborers, familiar with rural and small-town living, to work in physically demanding, unskilled jobs that, historically, have not required English language proficiency. The ethnic composition of the town’s 11,319 residents is 48.7% white, 43.3% Hispanic or Latino, and 6.1% black or African.

UNITING FOR WOMEN'S PROSPERITY IN NORTHERN COLORADO

Cancelling her retail shifts was becoming a weekly occurrence for Cassie Miller. Friends and family provided child care for her infant daughter, Taya, but something always came up at the last minute.

Paying for fully licensed child care was not an option: The monthly cost for infant care in a licensed child care center averages \$1,421 per month in Larimer County. Her earnings at \$13.16 per hour would cover child care and some rent, but nothing would be left for food or other basic needs.

Step 1: Stabilize Child Care

The Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) subsidizes child-care costs for working families with qualifying incomes. Cassie assumed she met the requirements, but learned there was a three-year wait list in Larimer County.

"I tried so hard to figure out day care, and it was just a nightmare," said Cassie. "I really didn't know what I was going to do."

She found **Project Self-Sufficiency** just in time. The WFCO WAGES grantee that helps low-income, single parents achieve economic independence, helped her secure affordable housing and obtain CCCAP through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

Stabilizing child care reduced her immediate anxiety, but she knew if she stayed in retail, she would never go off public supports or climb out of debt. Training or education to improve her long-term wage growth was necessary.

Step 2: Increase Income Potential

Cassie and her advisor, Nicole Gawronski, determined she will need to make \$26 per hour to meet her family's needs. She decided to pursue a degree in elementary education because she loves kids and the schedule is easier for a single mom to circumvent child care in the summers. Though starting salaries for teachers in Colorado are less than her target wage, with the child-care savings, she'll be on a path toward economic security.

But before she could enroll, there was just one more obstacle blocking that path: Although CCCAP can be used if a parent is working, in Larimer County it cannot be used while they go to school.

Recognizing this gap, **WomenGive**, a program of United Way of Larimer County and long-time WFCO partner and funder, provides child-care scholarships to single mothers (many of whom are in Project Self-Sufficiency) while they're in school. This essential resource allowed Cassie to enroll at community college part time and continue to work part time.

Step 3: Recognize It's a Long Game

With the help of Project Self-Sufficiency and WomenGive, Cassie will complete her associate degree in 2021 and her bachelor's degree in 2024. To meet this timeline, she'll eventually leave her job and go to school full time.

Nicole acknowledges it's a long game when helping single moms achieve economic security. Just 8 percent of single mothers who enroll in college graduate with an associate or bachelor's degree within six years.

"Trying to go to school without stable housing, child care, or while working too many hours is like building a house on quicksand," said Nicole. "We would rather our participants do well in school, even if that means leaving their jobs, to plan for long-term success."

To ensure she graduates, Cassie meets with Nicole monthly to discuss child care, school, and financial planning.

"She is just as invested in getting there as we are," said Nicole.

Step 4: Remove Systemic Barriers

Cassie's family helped where they could, but without the guidance and knowledge of Project Self-Sufficiency or child-care scholarships from WomenGive, returning to school wouldn't have been possible.

Addressing the state's child-care crisis also requires systemic change. **The Women's Foundation** researches child-care costs by county and lobbies policymakers to make the CCCAP program accessible to more families. WFCO also lobbies for tax credits that will improve financial outcomes for low-income working parents and child-care providers.

"Cassie's situation illustrates how the lack of affordable child care in Colorado obstructs families' economic progress," said Louise Myrland, vice president of programs at WFCO. "It takes many partnerships and multi-level approaches to make it attainable for low-income families in our state."

"It doesn't mean it's easy, but their support and resources have made it possible."

Between work, school, and parenting Taya (now 2 ½ years old), Cassie has no spare time – but she's committed to improving her situation.

"It's important to stress how much Project Self-Sufficiency, WomenGive, and The Women's Foundation have made a world of difference to my situation," said Cassie. "It doesn't mean it's easy, but their support and resources have made it possible."



Cassie (with daughter Taya) is studying elementary education



The Women's Foundation of Colorado

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