



Dear Urban Peak Supporter,

I joined Urban Peak in July of 2017. In many ways, that feels like yesterday and, in others, it feels like I have never worked anywhere else. Being the CEO of this organization is a great privilege. Every day, I am in awe of the powerful work done by our staff and am deeply humbled to witness the path our inspired young people walk.

At Urban Peak, we open most meetings by reading our vision, mission, belief and commitment statements. This practice grounds us in our work and purpose.

our vision

All Colorado youth have safe housing, supportive relationships and the opportunity for self-sufficiency and success.

The unfortunate truth is that, nationally, over 4.2 million people between the age of 15 and 24 are homeless.

our mission

To ignite the potential in youth to exit homelessness and create self-determined, fulfilled lives.

Last year, 88 percent of youth who exited our housing program went on to safe and stable living situations.

we believe

In the transformational power of acceptance.

While transgender people make up .06 percent of the population in the United States, they make up 2 percent of Urban Peak youth. Needless to say, 2 percent is a pretty staggering overrepresentation of this often marginalized subpopulation.

we believe

In the responsible stewardship of our resources.

Our work is intensive, and providing cohesive, trusting relationships with youth takes time, commitment and, yes, money. Without you Urban Peak would not exist. Thank you for joining our team!

we believe

That with compassion, guidance and support, positive change and healing can happen.

The young people we work with are just that – young. And just like the teenagers and young adults that you have at home, living next door or were once like you, these youth need time, boundaries and forgiveness to grow up.

we believe

That ending youth homelessness changes trajectories, saves lives and creates lasting community impact.

The streets of Denver are not a safe place to sleep and certainly not a home.

we are committed

To problem solving, shared accountability and a relentless focus on achieving real, sustainable and measurable results for the youth we serve.

Every young person who takes the brave step to walk through our doors deserves the opportunity to determine their path forward, and genuine change needs to last a lifetime.

we are committed

To being a national model of innovation and best practice through intentional focus on continuous improvement and growth.

The challenges our youth and community face have evolved; therefore we continue to evolve. We must be able to respond to increased demand and the contemporary issues faced by homeless youth today.

we are committed

To creating and providing a culture of safety, responsibility and respect.

Youth homelessness is often driven by family instability, involvement with systems such as foster care or juvenile justice and losing the support of families due to identifying as part of the LGBTQ+ population. Additionally, mental health, chronic health conditions, developmental disabilities, chronic poverty, substance abuse, urban growth and gentrification are complicating factors.

I hope you take the time to read our Impact Report. You, too, are part of our team. You are saving lives like Max's and Mo's and you will be inspired by Fatima. Thank you for being part of the Urban Peak family.

Gratefully,

Christina Carlson, MSW

CEO, Urban Peak



Without Urban Peak's services, it is likely that 30% of the youth served would become chronically homeless, costing the city a total of \$39,800 per person.

Max found Urban Peak's Shelter jarring when he first arrived. He had been spending time at a park in Littleton, sleeping on the ground, using drugs. Despite having graduated from high school, he was left homeless and helpless after a series of traumas. He wasn't used to Urban Peak's interest in him and, at times, didn't understand their motives. Their rules felt oppressive. Controlling his anger felt almost impossible. Over time, as Max felt safe and supported, he began to thrive at Urban Peak.

When he was nine years old, Max was adopted by American parents from a Russian orphanage where, as a way to raise funds, he had been put on stage to perform for an audience and solicit donations. Still to this day, Max commands a room; his charisma is contagious.

Max spent two long years at Urban Peak's Shelter. But the longer he stayed, the more resources he discovered. "I started to see the bigger picture of how many people were helping us. If it wasn't for their individual passion, they wouldn't be working here."

He wanted to move into an apartment building owned by Urban Peak, but waiting felt like an eternity. As he grappled with making good choices, he started to recover from his many traumatic experiences. "Something switched for me: start fighting for what you want."

A spot opened up at Rowan Gardens, and Max felt ready.

When he was five, Max's mother threw him out of a five-story building. He remembers the pain of landing. He remembers the ambulance that came to pick him up. He remembers waking up in the hospital. He then spent the next year at a St. Petersburg hospital before being shipped off to a crowded orphanage.

Max also remembers his move-in day at Rowan Gardens. "I finally got the help I needed because it was what I wanted, not what someone else wanted."

The transition to his own apartment hasn't been easy. With increased freedom, he struggled to maintain sobriety and manage his traumatic brain injury. Yet Urban Peak staff continue to believe in him. They have helped him understand the importance of making good choices and realize his full potential.

"If it wasn't for Urban Peak, I would be dead in a ditch somewhere or doing drugs that would have led me there."



fact:

Long-term savings: Urban Peak saves the community \$11.9 million a year by helping young people avoid chronic homelessness. ■







"Go back to your mama's!" While she was staying at an adult shelter, other women would chastise Mo for her age and youthful appearance. But her mother's was not a safe place, and Mo had nowhere else to go.

Mo has a way of positioning herself so that her body takes up as little space as possible. While trying to live under the radar in tight spaces, she's learned to keep herself small. But her petite frame holds a bright smile, cheerful laugh, quick wit and sharp tongue. It doesn't take long to learn how strong she is.

Growing up, Mo struggled with her mental health, labeled as "the problem child." Mental health has plagued her family, and her mother's successes and failures significantly impacted her life. Living with her mother in Kansas became a toxic situation, so Mo and her boyfriend came to Denver looking for opportunities: jobs and a place to live. But without a birth certificate or I.D., a job was hard to come by. The van they drove, the "Texas van that doesn't like the cold," broke down once the temperature plummeted, and their makeshift home became too cold to sleep in.

Mo has learned that she needs support and behavioral health services. Growing up, her family never had money to access this type of care.

After spending several unnerving days at separate adult shelters, Mo and her boyfriend found their way to Urban Peak. She is grateful for a bed, three meals a day and a loyal case manager, but living at a shelter with forty other youth is stressful, often triggering her emotions. Calm routines and safety help offset the chaotic household of her childhood.

Mo waits for housing that is more than a bunk bed and a locker at the Shelter. She is a quiet person who often longs to be alone. She is careful about who she lets into her life. Yet, "If I wasn't at Urban Peak, my case manager is someone I would choose to have as a friend," she says. "And that's not something I say about most people."

Mo strives to be engaged in the Urban Peak community. She's quick to point out where there is room for improvement: updated rules, better communication with staff, more time to connect with community resources, individual therapy. She takes advantage of the resources she can find: workshops, education, connections to jobs, even a trip to Cave of the Winds. Focusing on her wellness will allow her to leave the street behind for good. She is ready for a home of her own but still she waits. Appropriate housing is limited and long wait lists feel like an endless cycle where she is stuck in limbo.

fact:

College attainment: Since 2013, at least 438 Urban Peak clients have gone on to attend a college or university.

Urban Peak Programs

outreach

Urban Peak's Outreach team meets youth where they are at, often on the streets they call home. Whether it is offering simple food and hygiene materials or clothing to stay warm, the team begins building trusting relationships with this highly vulnerable population. Referrals to additional resources for shelter, housing, behavioral health and other services help to move youth from the streets to more stable and safe environments.

■ 102 youth were assisted in obtaining their legal identification documents so they can sign leases, find employment and access education services.

drop-in center

The Drop-In Center is a refuge and safe haven for youth experiencing homelessness. Hot breakfast, lockers to keep possessions safe, laundry facilities and showers are coupled with case management that helps youth exit life on the street.

■ 206 Drop-In Center youth accessed additional Urban Peak services.

shelter

Denver's only licensed shelter for homeless youth ages 15 through 20 provides safety and security to youth at a time of crisis. Open 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, the Urban Peak Shelter is a stable environment where the rights and identities of all youth are respected and protected. Case managers develop relationships and support youth with individualized case management plans in order to move toward stable housing, reunification with family or self-sufficiency. An onsite medical clinic staffed by volunteer physicians offers medical services. The Shelter expands capacity from 40 to 50 beds during inclement weather or emergency conditions.

■ 312 youth accessed Urban Peak's Shelter, meaning that 12,391 nights of shelter were provided to youth experiencing homelessness.

housing

Urban Peak puts its mission into action at each of its three apartment buildings and scattered-site housing units throughout the metro area. Urban Peak Housing provides support for young people who are living on their own, often for the first time, by meeting their distinct needs. Case management and positive relationships with Urban Peak staff create opportunities for youth to develop self-sufficiency and make progress toward self-determined, fulfilled lives. Behavioral health care, access to education and employment support and adaptive living skills training set youth on the path of independence and self-sufficiency through permanency.

■ 88% of youth who graduated from Urban Peak housing moved on to safe and stable living situations.

education & employment

Urban Peak's Education and Employment programming provides individual and small-group work to help youth experiencing homelessness increase their independence, build positive relationships, make and follow through on plans to achieve academically and develop employment and career skills. This can mean obtaining a GED, re-enrolling or completing coursework needed to graduate from high school, or applying for post-secondary educational opportunities. Job Readiness Training builds hard- and soft-skills such as cover letter and resume development, job search and interview practice, job retention training, time and money management and individualized services. These critical services support youth to become self-sufficient and maintain safe and stable housing.

■ 205 youth participated in education and employment services.





[social enterprise] peak thrift

Peak Thrift, Urban Peak's social enterprise thrift store, offers an opportunity for youth to develop job skills, gain experience through workforce development, interact with the community and contribute to Urban Peak's mission with the guidance and support of specially trained store managers. Job experience gained at Peak Thrift looks great on a resume.

■ 100% of Youth Associates maintained employment for 6 or more months.

case management

Case managers are the backbone of Urban Peak's work, supporting youth throughout their journey at Urban Peak and for many years into the future. Case managers provide trusting, supportive adult relationships that help youth heal from past trauma they have suffered. Case management plans begin with security, work toward stable housing and strive to fulfill the mission of igniting the potential in each youth who comes to

Urban Peak. Case managers coordinate access to all other supportive services and work with community partners to provide access to resources youth need to develop independence and find success.

■ 100% of youth received trauma-informed, strengths-based case management.

volunteers

Volunteers support Urban Peak on an ad hoc, regular and even full-time basis. From esteemed professionals providing their expertise free of charge to regular groups serving breakfast at the Drop-In Center, the generosity of volunteers elevates our impact and strengthens relationships between the community and the youth we serve. Volunteer opportunities are posted regularly on our website and Facebook page.

■ 6,935 meals were prepared and served by volunteers.



Fatima first experienced homelessness when she was five.

Her mom left her dad and took Fatima and her sister to a battered women's shelter. While her mom fought through that experience, going to school, working full time and providing for her daughters, a cycle of intergenerational poverty continued to impact Fatima.

Years later, Fatima's family was supportive as she enrolled at Metro State University, but they struggled financially and Fatima did not want to be a burden. She emancipated herself but was soon living in her car. She would linger on campus past class time and stay in the library during late hours. Between class and studying, Fatima watched for places to park or searched for a safe place to change and shower. At one point, the heat stopped working in her car. And then, in an accident, her car was totaled.

Her academic advisor referred her to Urban Peak, where she gained both a case manager and an apartment voucher.

"My case manager met me where I was at. Every Friday at 10 am, whether or not I was on my A game. Every Friday, 10 am, there was someone to talk to. To ask for help."

With housing came comfort, but also the insecurity of knowing that a voucher through Urban Peak was not a long-term solution. Between school, studying and working, she spent any spare time planning and budgeting, looking for something more stable.

Urban Peak's Education & Employment team connected Fatima with a technology repair company funded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) as she finished her Human Development and Sociology degree at Metro State University. Fatima knew that she wanted to work with youth, to be engaged and hands-on while making an impact. She knew she wanted to work at Urban Peak.

When an Urban Peak case manager position became available, Fatima realized taking her dream job would mean a pay cut. She sat down with her boyfriend, reviewed their financials, revisited the plans and budgets she had made in the past and realized that she could make the numbers work. She is now an Urban Peak Outreach Case Manager.

When she was little, Fatima and her family would make banana bread and pass it out to people in Civic Center Park. Even while her family was struggling financially, her mom made sure that Fatima was aware of the world around her.

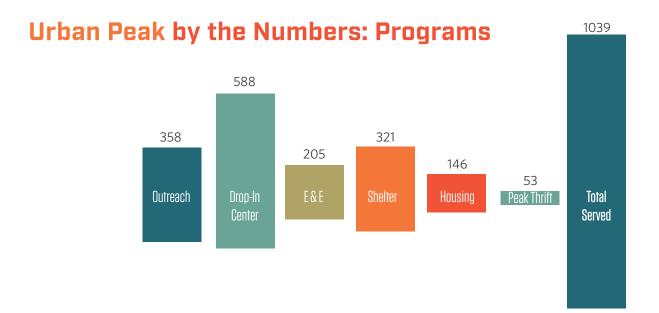
When she graduated college, Fatima didn't want a typical graduation party. She started to gather donations for people in need from friends, co-workers and anyone she could think of. She rented a locker to store everything and then organized a neighborhood party to hand out food, clothes, feminine hygiene products and additional donations. Now, in the winter, the party has become something of a tradition. She brings food trucks and donations and sets up a resource table. She rents that same storage locker to collect and keep donations.

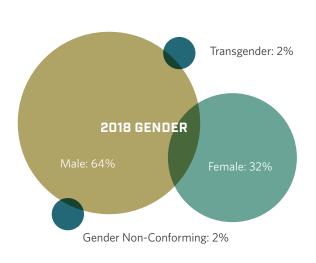
Today, Fatima's own apartment is close to Urban Peak. On weekends, she always comes by and checks in with youth she works with. They know she is always around and have learned to trust her.

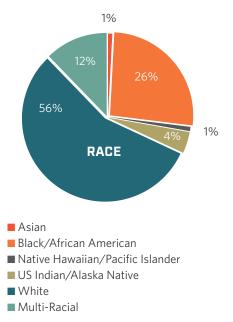
Fatima works with many youth who are struggling as they age out of Urban Peak's programs. Transitioning youth means connecting them with resources in state and out of state. It took a lot of time for Fatima to build trust with complete strangers. "Security and stability don't always come from people you know," she explains. She tells the youth she works with, "you are not alone." That was a big eye opener for her. And she works hard to make sure that the youth she serves know the same thing.

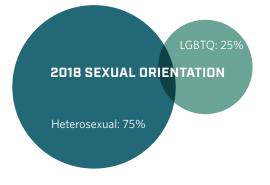
fact:

Safe, stable housing: In 2017 alone, only 54 clients came to Urban Peak from positive housing situations; but, by the end of the year, 350 clients had found positive, sustainable housing, a 548% increase. ■





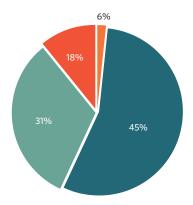




SELF REPORTED BARRIERS

Mental Health Issue 63%
Foster Care Involvement
Division of Youth Corrections Involvement 27%
Physical Abuse
Attempted Suicide 28%

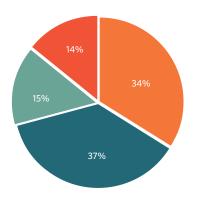
Urban Peak by the Numbers: Financials



REVENUE

Total support	\$ 6,825,373
■ Program & In-kind	\$ 437,586
■ Investments & Other*	\$ 1,255,269
■ Government Grants	\$ 2,082,612
■ Contributions & Special Events	\$ 3,049,906

^{*} includes gain on sale of building and insurance proceeds



EXPENSES

Overnight Shelter	\$ 1,171,498
■ Housing Services	\$ 1,268,504
■ Peak Thrift, Education & Employment	\$ 523,829
Outreach & Drop-in Center	\$ 502,572
Total Program Services	\$ 3,466,403
General & Administrative	\$ 733,567
Fundraising	\$ 630,023
Total Supporting Services	\$ 1,363,590
Depreciation	\$ 249,892
Total Expenses	\$ 5,079,885

NET ASSETS

 September 2018
 \$ 5,084,471

 September 2017
 \$ 3,338,983

 Increase (decrease) in Net Assets
 \$ 1,745,488



Serving as the Chair of the Board of Directors at Urban Peak

for the past two years has been a tremendous honor. While this is true for more reasons than I could ever put into a single letter, one is that I deeply believe in the transformational power of giving where you live: creating lasting community impact and saving lives.

Growing up, the deep bonds I formed in the community through friends and school provided the anchor I needed to feel accepted and motivated. As a child, I lived on the edge of poverty and community support and resources made the difference that brought me to a point in my life where I now get to give back. When I joined the Urban Peak board, I believed that I would be giving to an incredible organization. But during my tenure, I have come to realize that by being a member and leader of Urban Peak, I have gained much more than I have given.

At Urban Peak, when a youth walks through our doors, we don't see a homeless person. Instead, we see a young person who is in the vulnerable phase of life where they are no longer a child, but not yet a full adult. They are teenagers, and their brains are far from fully formed. We know they are highly vulnerable, have survived significant trauma and are resilient. Each youth that comes through a door at Urban Peak is treated with dignity and respect. They are provided the opportunity to be safe, to change their trajectories, to continue to grow up with loving and trusted adults and to build community among their peers.

I am proud of the many accomplishments that Urban Peak has achieved since I became the chair in 2016. During my time as chair, we:

- Hired our new CEO, Christina Carlson, who has been the spark for staff and community! Christina's passion for our mission and dedication to her team and our youth is inspiring.
- Continued to develop and build an engaged board who represents our entire community and brings passion and expertise to our agency.
- Received unanimous approval from the Denver City Council to rezone our current shelter and create a future vision so that Urban Peak can continue to grow and meet the needs of all youth who find themselves homeless in our community.
- Launched Peak Thrift, our social enterprise and thrift store. Not only does Peak Thrift support our bottom line, but it provides employment training for our youth so that they are better prepared to enter the job market.

At our last board retreat, a group of current Urban Peak young people came and talked to us about what Urban Peak has meant to them. I was reminded that they don't just develop life skills, they build support systems that include friendships, community and mentors. A young man told us that, by finding a home and sobriety at Urban Peak, he has regained custody of his son. Seeing his pride in his accomplishments was a reminder of why I am so privileged to be a part of Urban Peak. I am proud of the work I have done as board chair and I am thankful for the opportunity to serve.

Urban Peak changes lives, it has changed mine! Thank you for joining us on this journey. It is a great privilege.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Benefiel

2018 Chair of the Board of Directors at Urban Peak





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We apologize for any inadvertent omissions.



