



URBAN PEAK

# 2019 IMPACT REPORT



May, 2020



Dear Urban Peak Supporter,

2019 was a year of unprecedented growth for Urban Peak. We made exciting and dramatic progress expanding access to our most intensive services for youth experiencing homelessness throughout the Denver metro area.

When we began planning this report, I was excited to celebrate the year in review and consider the opportunities ahead of us. **Every story demonstrates the impact of our work, the resiliency of our youth and the dedication of our staff to transform lives.**

Then the ground shifted and the world changed in seemingly unbelievable ways.

The surge of COVID-19 cases and the economic impacts have been disorienting, upending our day-to-day lives and making us fearful of what the future might hold. Urban Peak has been and continues to be deeply impacted as well.

That being said, as we go to print, we continue to provide our full continuum of services, including 24-hour shelter, housing, case management and life skills. Our medical clinic and drop-in center are open, and Peak Thrift is acting as a distribution center for supplies, not only to Urban Peak programs and youth, but also to many of our partner agencies.

The onslaught of information and challenges since the arrival of the novel coronavirus has been unrelenting for Urban Peak, as I know it has been for many others. It has profoundly tested our youth, our staff, our board and me. We've had to find new ways to establish social distancing practices in our drop-in center, shelter, housing and education and employment programs. We've had to adjust how we deliver services and find new and innovative ways to build safe and trusting relationships. We've had to revisit our budget, over and over again, to find new efficiencies while continuing to deliver programs that are rooted in best practices and trauma-informed care.

**The youth who walk through the doors of Urban Peak remind me how to move forward through a time of trauma, anxiety and mourning. They teach me about strength, resiliency and transformation. They teach me how to look forward.**

Today, I look forward with hope and joy. I remain committed to Urban Peak's core mission. I could not be more humbled by our community's outpouring of support or by our staff's and board's relentless focus on our mission.



Christina Carlson and Precious,  
an Urban Peak youth, holding her  
daughter at Maverick Thinkers, 2019.

While COVID-19 has wreaked havoc globally, chaos, crisis and uncertainty are not new to our youth. Many of them have felt as though they've been living in a constant state of emergency for years – or their entire short lives.

Given the current uncertainty we face, what do we, as a community, have to offer youth who are experiencing homelessness? What can we do to support these vulnerable young people? How do we give them voice? How do we show them love?

We can give them a safe place to live and build community. We can give them space to grow and thrive. We can give them the opportunity to move beyond their current state of emergency. We can give them Urban Peak.

Collectively, we will recover. Collectively, we will move forward. Collectively, we are learning important lessons from the youth at Urban Peak about resiliency and fortitude. **Today, more than ever, we owe each other Urban Peak.**

Gratefully,

Christina Carlson  
CEO, Urban Peak

**#be the spark**

## Jesus

"I came here to live with my brother, but that didn't work out. **But at Urban Peak, there are people who look out for me.**"

Jesus left his family in Texas to come live with his brother in Denver. But family relationships are complicated. Living with his brother didn't turn out the way he had hoped. Soon, he had nowhere to stay. But he became a regular guest at the Drop-In Center. Sometimes, you find family where you least expect it.

Personable. Charming. Social. "If you aren't sure if you've met Jesus, then you definitely haven't met him. He's not someone you could forget." That's how his case managers describe him.

Jesus is the first to admit that relationships can be hard for him, starting with his family. He feels a push and pull with them. There is a sense of obligation – that he should go back to Texas – live a life that they expect for him. A life that, in no way, would be easy.

At Urban Peak, though, he's making progress. He has formed close, lasting bonds with several case managers. From the Drop-In Center, he built up stability and secured housing at Urban Peak's STAR apartments. He is working to stay clean and sober – a difficult feat with a share of setbacks. But he's getting better at recognizing his triggers. He is more aware now of who or what has the power to draw him back to substances he wants to leave behind.

Jesus also knows that he needs to improve his reading, writing and math skills. He meets regularly with Education and Employment staff to study for the GED. He doesn't like to meet in groups, though. It feels like school – where he wasn't successful and when he was part of a culture that didn't value it much anyway. **He is trying to set his own course, and that's hard, too, if you feel like you are back in a time or at a place where you felt trapped.**

When he first moved into STAR, Jesus thought he'd last for three months. Whether it was the rules, the other youth or the pull of his family in Texas, for one reason or another he didn't trust that he could find stability. But it has been almost a year since his move-in date. He's thinking about getting a job through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. He's studying more for his GED.

Jesus dreams about going to New York City. The lights, the activity, the millions of people and the unlimited opportunity. The chance to start new and be his own person. **He's accomplished more in the last year than he thought possible.** He's built relationships, he has a safe and stable home. He's found success staying sober. New York doesn't seem so far away now. ■



# 2019 IMPACT REPORT



The photographs throughout are by John Johnston Photography.  
We are very grateful for his generous work for Urban Peak.



HUF

## Shelby

Shelby has a calm presence, projecting confidence that comes from experience, from surviving grief and overcoming obstacles. And from knowing that she is building a life that she will be proud of.

Shelby first came to Urban Peak in search of a stable place to stay at the Shelter. She quickly connected with the Education and Employment team, and within days of her arrival had started Employment Skills Training.

Her employment and education goals were very motivating. Not long after first arriving at the Shelter, she left to stay with friends but continued to attend classes at Urban Peak. When that temporary living situation didn't work out, she returned to the Shelter and became even more focused on her goals. She put aside some initial fears about the GED and, **within her first year at Urban Peak, she has completed Employment Skills Training, earned a GED, found stable employment and moved into her own apartment at Rox's Place.**

"Her quick movement through Urban Peak's programs is a testament to Shelby's tenacity and resilience," her case manager said.

Having her own apartment has given Shelby an even greater sense of security, and that has translated to growth in multiple aspects of her life. She is careful to manage her mental health and she is succeeding at work. Her biggest priority is rebuilding her relationship with her young son and working toward gaining full custody.

Her son, now a toddler, is in the care of relatives. Shelby is slowly building trust and connection with him, but she understands that it takes time. Having been part of the foster care system herself, she is thoughtful about how she can maintain a positive relationship with him and strengthen it at a careful pace. She has him over for regular visits and plans to have him stay overnight before he lives with her full-time. "At his age, routine and consistency are really important," Shelby explains. "And that's something I have, thanks to Urban Peak."

Shelby craves positive relationships and has managed to stay connected to her extended family through a number of ups and downs. The COVID-19 pandemic and the quarantines and isolation that come with it now present new challenges. Her hours at work have fluctuated and in-person visits with family have been scaled back. Being physically present is an important part of connection to her, and it has been difficult to give that up. **But she appreciates the stability she had already begun to build. She has remained focused on her mental health and taken the time to reflect on the relationships she has in her life.** As her work hours have started to return and her visits with her son have continued, she is optimistic about her future.

Despite what the world has thrown at Shelby, **she knows what she wants and can point to her last year with Urban Peak as proof that she can achieve her goals.** In a time of uncertainty, she has found confidence, success and stability and can now focus her energy on her relationship with her son. ■

## Urban Peak Programs

### OUTREACH

The Outreach team meets youth where they are – often on the streets they call home. By offering safe conversation, simple food and hygiene materials or clothing to stay warm, the team aims to build trusting relationships with a highly vulnerable population. Referrals to additional resources for shelter, housing, behavioral health and other services help to move youth from the streets to more safe and stable environments.

### DROP-IN CENTER

The Drop-In Center is a refuge and safe haven for youth experiencing homelessness. Hot meals, lockers to keep belongings safe, laundry facilities and showers are coupled with case management and trauma-informed groups that help youth exit life on the street.

### SHELTER

Denver's only licensed shelter for homeless youth ages through 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 to move toward stable housing, reunification with family or self-sufficiency. Volunteers help serve hot meals three times a day, and once a week the Shelter hosts Community Breakfast, a chance for youth and staff to share highlights and words of encouragement. The Shelter expands capacity by 25 percent from 40 to 50 beds in inclement weather or emergency conditions.

### HOUSING

Urban Peak puts its mission into action at each of its three apartment buildings and scattered-site housing units. For young people living on their own, often for the first time, Urban Peak Housing can meet their distinct needs. Case management and positive relationships with 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 a path of independence and self-sufficiency.

### EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

Urban Peak's Education and Employment services help youth experiencing homelessness increase their independence, build positive relationships, make progress 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 and time and money management. These critical services support youth as they work to become self-sufficient and maintain safe and stable housing.





## 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.

## 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 their past trauma. 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 the resources youth need in order to develop independence and stability.

## 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 meals at the Drop-In Center, such generosity elevates our impact and strengthens relationships between the community and the youth we serve. In 2019, 3,140 volunteers contributed a total of 22,502 hours to Urban Peak. Volunteer opportunities are posted regularly on our website and Facebook page.



**URBAN PEAK SAVES** the community upwards of \$19.2 million annually, primarily by preventing incarceration and avoiding chronic homelessness.

## Celeste

Respect. It's a word that comes up over and over for Celeste in her role as a peer navigator at Urban Peak.

She works at the Drop-In Center, where she provides a bridge between youth and their case managers.

"I do a lot of listening, a lot of understanding of what someone is saying," she explains. "But I'm not here to boost them up or tear them down."

**"The Drop-In Center is about being respectful, regardless of your background or identity."**

Like other staff, Celeste won't tolerate derogatory language. Sometimes, youth need to be reminded to be respectful of staff. But more often, it's to be respectful of themselves. And when that's the case, Celeste will step in. She sees her role as providing additional support, no matter what.

An aunt suggested that Celeste connect with Urban Peak after she came to Denver from Seattle, but could not find stable housing and or support to continue her education. She enrolled in Urban Peak's GED program, which connected her to a case manager. **"Urban Peak meets you where you're at. When you are ready for it, they are there to help you."**

Eventually, several staff encouraged her to apply for the peer navigator position. It's a role that is intentionally designed to be filled by a young person who has experienced homelessness in their past. This connection to the experiences of current Urban Peak youth allows for understanding, compassion and the potential to build safe, trust-filled relationships.

Celeste was intrigued by the role but, having mostly worked in restaurants, she was also scared to apply. Today, she's glad that the staff pushed her to turn in an application. Now a half year in, she's ready to switch career tracks. "I thought I would probably end up in the culinary arts, but now I want to be a case manager."

Celeste has excelled in the peer navigator role, finding ways to connect with youth who might have struggled with more formal aspects of the Drop-In Center where she works. She helps youth who are new to the program become comfortable in the space and guides them to the multiple services they can access.

"She has such a natural ability to do this job and do it well," said Kelsey Antun, the assistant director of programs at Urban Peak. **"Every time I watch her in our space and see her working here, I'm filled with pride and gratitude."**

Celeste also has a compliment for Kelsey, who used to be her case manager. "Kelsey's care for me has never wavered. She's always shown me the utmost respect." ■

## From the Chair of the Board of Directors

In the span of a few short weeks, from the time that I began planning what I would say about my year as board chair for Urban Peak in 2019, to now as we prepare this report for print, the world has changed. The ground has shifted under my family's feet, as I am sure it has for yours. Like the rest of the nation and most of the world, the community in and around Denver where Urban Peak operates has also been transformed. I'm still not sure exactly what it will look like a year or two years from now as we recover and rebuild.

What I am sure of is that the need for Urban Peak to live into its mission is greater than ever, and our vision remains steadfast and unchanged. Maybe you already knew that I've been around Urban Peak for a while. What I know is that Urban Peak must continue to be around for even longer, that we must continue to be available for our community's most vulnerable young people: those who do not have a home.

When I look back to 2019, I see how we made profound progress as an organization. We moved from a place of stability to a place of confidence. Though the world now seems far more unstable, I'm grateful and reassured that the work we had done before will allow us to navigate the challenges that we will face prudently and successfully. We will build on our solid foundation and have a transformative impact - not just on the youth we serve, but on our entire community.

There are three aspects of Urban Peak's work that positioned us to be in such a solid place by early 2020:

- **We have effective leadership and a strong, dedicated team.** Christina Carlson, our CEO is an outstanding leader who values, respects and supports Urban Peak's staff. She pushed us as a board to ensure that our staff are compensated at a level that recognizes them for the professionals who they are. With competitive wages and benefits, we can be confident that our staff want to be and want to stay at Urban Peak. Not only does this allow us to attract top talent and keep our top performers over the long term, but it is the right thing to do. Our staff work long, hard hours and walk alongside our youth as they confront unthinkable traumas. For our staff to take care of our youth, we need to take care of our staff. And we are.
- **We make a profound difference in the lives of the youth we serve.** Through our continuum of services that meet youth where they are at, our case managers build trust-filled relationships with our youth, sometimes the first in their lives, and offer a message of unconditional hope for all who work through our doors. For many of our youth, Urban Peak is the first place where they've even been told that they have the potential to live a self-determined, fulfilled life.
- **We are deepening our impact with our youth and in our community.** The safety, shelter, food and housing that we provide to youth are vital and desperately needed. But the positive relationships that staff build with our youth and model between each other are actually at the heart of what we do. In 2019, we were able to refine our program models to strengthen those relationships even further. We also leaned into our work with other service providers in Denver through the Homeless Leadership Council, working collaboratively to find solutions for those experiencing homelessness and advising the city on the best steps they can take to help support Urban Peak and strengthen this community.

I could not be prouder of where this organization found itself by the end of 2019, or by the way we have begun to navigate such a challenging and unprecedented time. I'm confident that, when this pandemic is behind us, Urban Peak will be an even stronger organization igniting even more potential in the young people we serve.

Sincerely,



Dick Thomas

Chair of the Board of Directors at Urban Peak



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dick Thomas, Retired, Board Chair  
Kyle Wilson, First Bank, Board Chair of Urban Peak Colorado Springs  
David Jennings, Metro Medicaid Consultants, Secretary  
Charlene Laus, Downtown Denver Partnership, Treasurer  
Kirsten Benefiel, HHS Inc.  
Brianna Borin, Snooze A.M. Eatery  
Sarah Burgamy, Phoenix RISE  
Christina Carlson, CEO, Urban Peak  
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Hamid Taha, Alpine Lumber  
Terri Taylor, Bryan Cave  
Joe Thome, Colorado Division of Criminal Justice  
Katie Wells, Office of Behavioral Health,  
Colorado Dept. of Human Services

## KEY STAFF MEMBERS

Christina Carlson, Chief Executive Officer  
Kendall Rames, Deputy Director  
Shawna Rae Kempainen, Executive Director, Colorado Springs  
Cassandra Contreras, Director of Operations  
Clayton Gonzales, Director of Programs  
Katherine Lawson, Director of Development  
Tamra Schmitt, Director of Finance

## urbanpeak.org

2100 Stout Street  
Denver, CO 80205  
303.974.2800

## PEAK THRIFT

4890 Pecos Street  
Denver, CO 80221  
720.484.5689

## FOLLOW US ON



## 2019 Urban Peak by the Numbers: Programs



### OUTREACH

*433 youth served in 2019*

**46%** increase in average number of outreach contacts per youth in 2019 compared to 2018

**164** youth were assisted in obtaining legal identification documents

**52** youth exited streets to safe and stable housing



### DROP-IN CENTER

*580 youth served in 2019*

**11,015** meals served

**108** youth obtained health-related referrals

**28** contacts made with each youth at the Drop-In Center, on average



### SHELTER

*319 youth served in 2019*

**11,703** total nights spent at the Shelter by individual youth

**20%** of youth spending a night were between 15 and 17 years of age

**137** youth staying at the shelter accessed Education and Employment services

**47 nights** average length of stay at the shelter



### HOUSING

*142 youth served in 2019*

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

**92%** of youth exited to safe and stable living conditions

**70%** maintained housing for 6 months or more





## EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

*200 youth served in 2019*

**91%** of youth demonstrated progress in Employment Skills Training

**49** youth engaged in work-related service learning

**21** youth obtained professional training certificates



## PEAK THRIFT

*64 youth served in 2019*

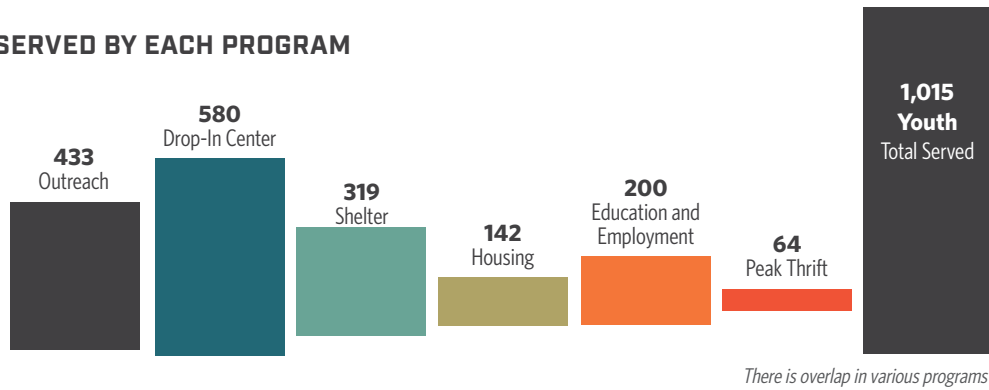
**100%** of those completing their work experience demonstrated skill gain

**83%** of Workforce Innovation youth were employed for 6 or more months

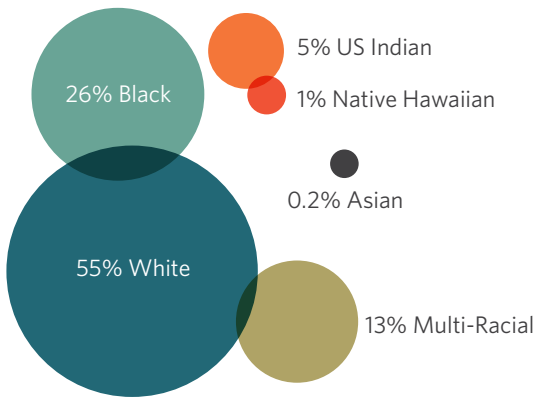
**5** youth were hired by Peak Thrift full-time

## 2019 Urban Peak by the Numbers: Demographics

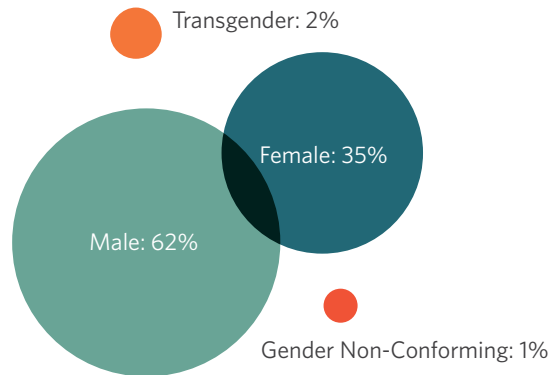
### YOUTH SERVED BY EACH PROGRAM



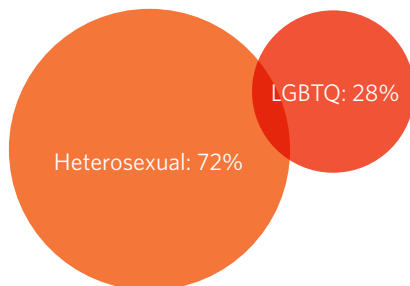
### URBAN PEAK YOUTH RACE



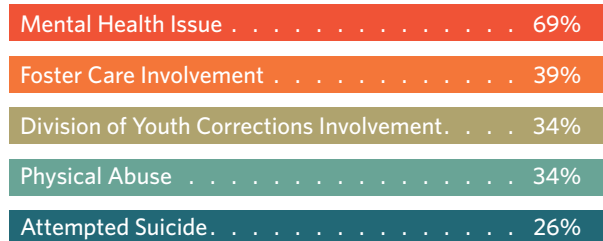
### 2019 GENDER



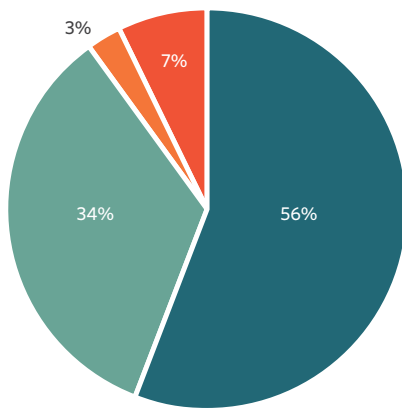
### 2019 SEXUAL ORIENTATION



### SELF REPORTED BARRIERS

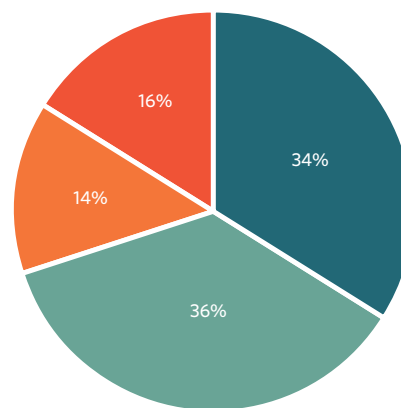


## Urban Peak by the Numbers: Financials



### REVENUE

■ Contributions & Special Events	\$ 3,202,204
■ Government Grants	\$ 1,961,408
■ Investments & Other	\$ 161,286
■ Program & In-kind	\$ 429,110
<b>Total Support</b>	<b>\$ 5,754,008</b>



### EXPENSES

■ Overnight Shelter	\$ 1,367,341
■ Housing Services	\$ 1,436,426
■ Peak Thrift, Education & Employment	\$ 544,810
■ Outreach & DIC	\$ 616,288
<b>Total Program Services</b>	<b>\$ 3,964,865</b>
General & Administrative	\$ 758,001
Fundraising	\$ 564,533
<b>Total Supporting Services</b>	<b>\$ 1,322,534</b>
Depreciation	\$ 241,265
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 5,528,664</b>

### NET ASSETS

Change in Net Assets before Depreciation	\$ 466,609
Depreciation	\$ (241,265)
Change in Net Assets	\$ 225,344
Net Assets beginning of year	\$ 5,084,471
<b>Net Assets end of year</b>	<b>\$ 5,309,815</b>

## We are grateful to all of our donors

who give critical support to Urban Peak, regardless of the size of their donation. Below, we give special acknowledgment to those donors who were able to contribute \$500 or more in Fiscal Year 2019.

### \$25,000+

The Anschutz Foundation  
Bank of America  
The Colorado Health Foundation  
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### \$10,000 - \$24,999

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C.E.C Laundry Corporation  
Matthew Chambers  
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Chris Chase  
Cherry Creek North Neighborhood  
Association  
Christ Church United Methodist  
Christian Living Communities  
Susan Chong  
City Council District 5  
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CoBank  
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Megan Baldwin  
Kristi Balken  
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 Yelp Denver  
 Caitlynn Zall  
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 Maverick Thinkers, Grant Muller  
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In March, 2020, Urban Peak established the Crisis Assistance Fund in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Donations to the fund will be used to support Urban Peak, including keeping outreach and programs operational, paying for critical supplies to keep facilities clean and youth fed, and offsetting additional paid sick leave for staff who show symptoms of illness or who must self-isolate due to potential exposure.

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