



URBAN PEAK

2021 IMPACT

R E P O R T



**urban peak ignites
the potential in youth
to exit homelessness and
create self-determined,
fulfilled lives.**

May 2022

Urban Peak Family,

2021 was another year that tested Urban Peak: our youth, our team and our entire community. We continued to respond and adjust to the ever-changing COVID-19 landscape. We witnessed firsthand the devastating, ongoing impact that the pandemic had on our youth and staff. The severity of increased isolation, economic inequality, lack of access to mental health and substance misuse treatment and the affordable housing crisis that is gripping our city impacted our youth and staff in many difficult ways.



However, Urban Peak remained a place of hope and inspiration. As we all know, teenagers are energetic, rebellious, hormonal and impulsive. Young adults are independent, emotional – and impulsive. More importantly, the youth at Urban Peak are funny and resilient.

I know the homelessness crisis is more visible than ever. I know that we all struggle to rebuild from the pandemic. I know that economic inequalities and injustices are a critical awakening for us all. I know that I am lucky to come to work at Urban Peak. I know that our community is lucky to have Urban Peak as a critical resource for youth experiencing homelessness. But most of all, I know it is a great privilege to work alongside these young people.

As a member of the Urban Peak family I hope that you find hope and pride by being a part of the community that cares for the youth we serve. These young people bring me hope. They make me laugh. They prepare me for my emerging teenager at home and they teach me about resiliency and perseverance through hard times. They remind me of what is good and why this work is critical for our community.

I am grateful for our youth. I am grateful for you and I am endlessly grateful for Urban Peak. Thank you for walking this path with us. All of us at Urban Peak are excited about what lies ahead. We are excited to grow, we are excited to expand our services and, most importantly, we are excited to increase our impact.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christina Carlson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Christina Carlson (she/her)
Urban Peak CEO

Jaymes (she/her) and Freyja

When Jaymes moved to Colorado Springs from Jamaica, there were many culture shocks, from the cold weather to strange holidays. She moved to live with her father, but she had only seen him once when she was six or seven years old after he left her family when she was three. Aside from her family, she has never met another Jamaican person in all the time she has lived in Colorado.

As a teen, Jaymes became more rebellious and struggled with the strict, religious rules in her dad's household. She left and stayed for a few days with a friend who connected her to the Salvation Army and, ultimately, the Urban Peak Shelter in Denver.

Jaymes quickly connected with the staff at the Shelter. They showed how they cared about her as a person and honored her own beliefs. "They listened to me and got me help."

When housing became available at Urban Peak's Rowan apartments, Jaymes was a little overwhelmed but also excited to have her own place. "When you are finally not around so many people, **it sinks in that this is your life. You are an actual adult.**"

Jaymes worked a lot, finding jobs at Subway and Jimmy John's as well as Peak Thrift, Urban Peak's thrift store.

In October of 2020, her daughter, Freyja, was born. Having a baby during a pandemic while living alone for the first time in an apartment was isolating but also empowering. "It's so crazy that I birthed a little human, **but the best part of being a mom is the unconditional love.**"

Over time, Jaymes has found childcare for Freyja, giving her time to start working again and to study for her GED. Freyja's father is also involved, frequently watching her while Jaymes is at work. Jaymes is also making plans to study cosmetology at Emily Griffith Technical College and become a licensed cosmetologist. She hopes to eventually open a nail salon or start a makeup line. "**I think about what's next for Freyja and me every single day.**"

At Urban Peak, Jaymes found stability and support from her case managers from the day she arrived through having a baby in a pandemic and now working toward self-sufficiency. "**Any time of day I can sit down with Urban Peak staff. They changed my life drastically.**" ■



**we believe
that ending youth
homelessness changes
trajectories, saves lives
and creates lasting
community impact**



**we believe
in the transformational
power of acceptance**

Leo (he/him)

When Leo wasn't sure where he was going to sleep one night, a manager at the pizza place where he was working helped him find a safe place to go.

Though Leo and his mom are still close, "she helps me out a lot," she struggled to take care of his sister and him at the same time. Leo felt like he couldn't stay at home any longer. So Leo and his manager looked up local shelters online, and Urban Peak had the best reviews. "Like 4.5 out of 5 stars," Leo explained.

Leo has already learned a strategy to move forward with his goals: when he sees a problem, he looks for solutions, using evidence to determine the best next step. Combined with his work ethic, this approach is starting to serve him well.

When Leo first came to the Shelter in the summer of 2021, he was determined to keep his job in the far northeast corner of Denver, which meant a two-hour bus ride each way between the Shelter and his work.

But after several months of a brutal commute, it wasn't the time on the bus that made him look for another job. Instead, it was an awareness of racial discrimination and a lack of opportunity. He realized that other people were quickly getting raises, while he was stuck earning minimum wage. And when he worked to learn new skills, several of his co-workers would be disrespectful. **"I learned everything faster than they did. They would get annoyed, like I was trying to out-do them. It was a toxic environment."**

At the end of October, Leo asked his Urban Peak case manager to help him find a new job. He put in several applications and was quickly hired at Sexy Pizza. "I told my new manager all about my situation. That I'm staying at a shelter and I'm hoping to get my own place."

At first, it was a hard transition. "Their menu is twice as long and I wasn't getting as many hours as I needed." He was already making plans to get in his own apartment and knew that he needed to save money to support his goals. But over time, his hours have increased and he is getting more responsibility. **He is making enough now to start saving for when he moves into Urban Peak Housing**, and he was even able to buy his mom a new face mask showing off her favorite team, the Chicago Bears.

In addition to working, Leo is a student at Community College of Aurora. He's studying college algebra and college English this semester. He likes writing, and though algebra can be hard, he gets test prep support at the Shelter through Urban Peak's education program. He's also found YouTube videos that work through some of the same problems he's been assigned.

Recently, Leo's mom and sister came to see him at the restaurant. His co-workers told Leo's mom that her son is "amazing." "She almost cried."

The wait list for young adults experiencing homelessness to access independent housing can be long, but Urban Peak is working to help Leo navigate that bureaucracy. With the help of his case manager, Leo hopes that he will move into his own apartment this spring or early in the summer. The urgent need for more housing options and more flexibility for youth like Leo is clear.

After more than a year of living at the Shelter, he is looking forward to the independence, the quiet and sense of peace that will come with having his own space. He added, "I'm definitely going to be happy." ■

Noah (he/him)

Noah arrived in Colorado after reconnecting with a friend from high school who had an apartment through Urban Peak. Years of homelessness had taken their toll. “A friend from high school offered me a spot on her couch. Turned out there wasn’t a couch.”

Urban Peak’s Shelter was a better place to get support – and a more comfortable sleeping arrangement.

Noah quickly learned that Urban Peak offers far more than a couch, or even a bed. He made connections with staff and, even though it felt strange at first, began to grow comfortable with the stability that Urban Peak could provide.

Though Noah has a big family with ten siblings, home life in Arizona was unstable. **“Even as a kid I bounced around a lot. My mom took me out of school at 15 so that I could take care of my dad when he was sick. Then he died and I was homeless. My mom didn’t want me.”**

Experiencing homelessness meant always moving around. First, it was sleeping on the light rail. “They have bougie light rail in Arizona,” as Noah described it. Then to California, some time in Texas and New Mexico. Back to Arizona and then, finally, the generous offer for help that brought him to Colorado.

Serious health issues put Noah at heightened risk for complications from COVID-19. After arriving at the Shelter in the spring of 2020, staff quickly moved him into a hotel set up for people experiencing homelessness who were at heightened risk from the virus. An Urban Peak apartment opened up soon after, and Noah has been there ever since, “the longest I’ve been in one place for years.”

Noah’s chronic health issues require frequent medical appointments, but he is determined to continue in school. Though he says that “parabolas are my downfall,” he will finish Algebra 2B and graduate from high school at the end of the semester this spring.

English and software engineering are his favorite subjects. He enjoys poetry and is “really good at writing” but wants to study coding at Emily Griffith Technical College. “Coding is a language,” he said, explaining the connection between two diverse academic interests. Long term, Noah aspires to earn a doctorate in computer science.

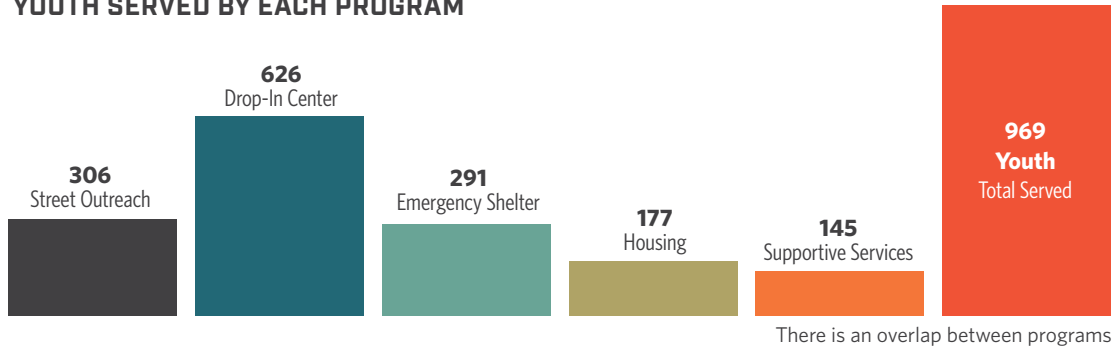
Within Urban Peak Housing, Noah has shown a knack for building and sustaining community in some of the same ways that he first started to see when he arrived at the Shelter. He has an eclectic group of friends and everyone seems to know his rescued Great Pyrenees, Ophelia. **“I have a big heart. I take care of people.”** ■



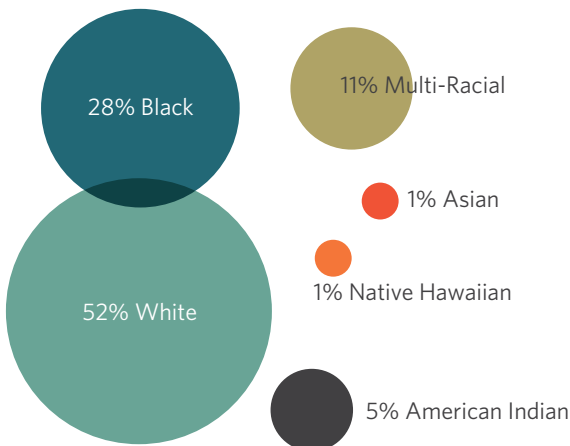
**we are committed
to creating and providing a
culture of safety, responsibility
and respect.**

2021 Urban Peak by the Numbers: Demographics

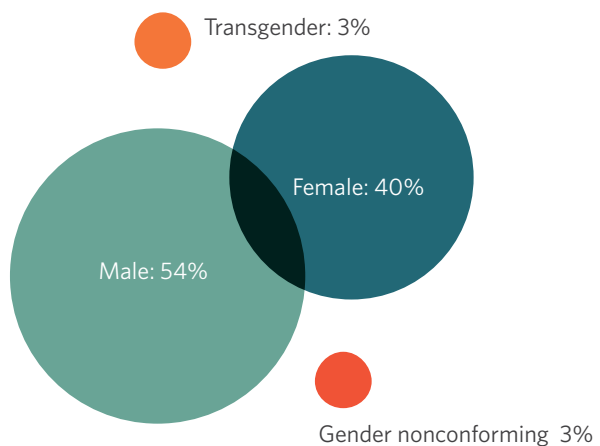
YOUTH SERVED BY EACH PROGRAM



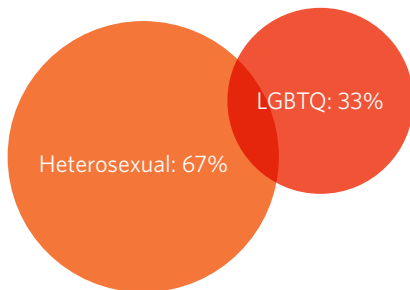
YOUTH RACE



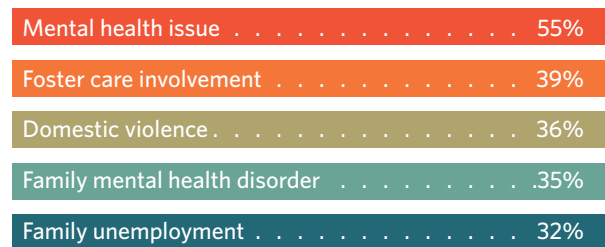
YOUTH GENDER



YOUTH SEXUAL ORIENTATION



SELF-REPORTED BARRIERS



Urban Peak Programs

DROP-IN CENTER

The Drop-In Center is a refuge and safe haven for youth experiencing homelessness ages 15 through 24. Hot meals, lockers to keep belongings safe, laundry facilities and showers are coupled with case management and access to community resources to help youth exit life on the street. Though COVID-19 limited capacity, the Drop-In Center has remained open every day throughout the pandemic.

OUTREACH

The Outreach team meets youth where they are – often on the streets they call home. By offering safe conversation, 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.

SHELTER

Denver's only licensed shelter for homeless youth ages through 15 through 20 provides safety and security to youth when they are in 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. To enhance the safety of youth at the Shelter during COVID, beds for youth were reduced and reconfigured, and some vulnerable youth or those with COVID infections were moved to respite settings off site.

HOUSING

Urban Peak puts its mission into action at each of its three apartment buildings as well as scattered-site housing units. Urban Peak Housing is particularly well suited for young people living on their own, often for the first time. On-site case managers offer positive relationships and look for opportunities to assist youth as they develop self-sufficiency and make progress toward self-determined, fulfilled lives. Behavioral health care, access to education and employment support and training in adaptive living skills training set youth on a path of independence and self-sufficiency.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Urban Peak provides a wide range of services for youth experiencing homelessness to help increase their independence, build positive relationships, improve their well-being, make progress to achieve academically and develop employment and career skills. Education services include support obtaining a GED, re-enrolling or completing coursework needed to graduate from high school or applying for post-secondary educational opportunities. Employment services help to build hard and soft skills such as cover letter and resume development, job search and interview practice, job retention training and time and money management. Peak Thrift, Urban Peak's social enterprise thrift store, provides youth an opportunity to develop job skills under specially trained store managers and contribute to Urban Peak's mission. Medical and clinical services as well as social and emotional support assist youth as they work to become self-sufficient and maintain safe and stable housing.

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

The COVID-19 pandemic required Urban Peak's dedicated volunteers to rapidly shift from in-person opportunities to distanced forms of support like mask-making and donating meals from local restaurants. With the return of volunteers directly into our programs, the meals that are served, the skills that are taught and the relationships that are built between Urban Peak youth and members of their community are more valuable than ever.

From the Chair of the Board of Directors

At the start of our last fiscal year, it was clear that COVID-19 would not be a short-term crisis. We were amid a long-lasting pandemic that would continue to impact Urban Peak's delivery of services. We knew that we would do whatever it took to operate our Drop-In Center, Shelter and Housing programs. But navigating social distancing, masking and other health regulations already felt exhausting.

I'm pleased with how Urban Peak responded to all the challenges that emerged and how we are positioned for even more impact in the future. There were a few highlights for me over the last year.

Urban Peak leadership fought to get our staff and youth vaccinated. Our leadership team advocated for Urban Peak and other organizations that serve people experiencing homelessness, insisting that both our staff and our youth be prioritized for vaccination.



Working directly with vulnerable populations living in congregate settings creates an elevated risk both for contracting COVID-19 and developing more severe symptoms. As a result of our advocacy, staff became eligible for vaccines early in 2021. They also supported youth in getting vaccinated by providing access to safe, easy and comfortable vaccine clinics – many held at our own buildings.

We built and expanded powerful partnerships. Our CEO, Christina Carlson, continued to convene the Homeless Leadership Council. Leaders shared information about responding to the pandemic, identified opportunities to impact public policy and coordinated directly with government agencies and elected officials.

In July of 2021, U.S. Rep. Diana DeGette announced her request of \$3 million in federal funding to help support Urban Peak's Shelter redevelopment. Her collaboration demonstrates the power of strong relationships between Urban Peak, elected leaders and our community.

Our youth and staff continued to build resiliency and find pathways out of homelessness. Our on-site medical clinic, work opportunities at Peak Thrift and groups hosted by our social-emotional coordinator are a few examples of how our staff meet youth where they are, build relationships and encourage personal growth.

Each month, I love to read the Youth Spotlight in our newsletter highlighting youth accomplishments. Several have found jobs, others have earned GEDs and many are finding safe, stable housing.

One of the reasons that I feel comfortable looking back at the challenges we faced last year is because we have so many exciting opportunities ahead. The funding that Rep. DeGette announced back in July of 2021 has provided momentum for Urban Peak to secure additional funds that will culminate in a new Shelter and, just as importantly, a new model for serving youth experiencing homelessness. Stay tuned for more news about this opportunity.

I'm excited to see everything that Urban Peak will accomplish over the next few years. But I'm even more excited to witness the lives that will change after more young people walk through our doors.

Charlene Laus, (she/her)
Board Chair



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KEY STAFF MEMBERS

Christina Carlson, Chief Executive Officer
Kelsey Antun, Director of Programs
Cassandra Contreras, Director of Operations
Alicia Economos, Director of Development
Clayton Gonzales, Director of Strategic Initiatives
Tamra Schmitt, Director of Finance

URBAN PEAK

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Denver, CO 80205
303.974.2900

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2021 Urban Peak by the Numbers: Programs



OUTREACH IMPACT

Youth served: **306**

Hours of case management provided to youth through Outreach: **680**

Youth reached by Outreach team who connected to case management services: **240 (78%)**



DROP-IN CENTER IMPACT

Youth served: **626**

Meals served: **15,248**

Shower and laundry services provided: **2,042**



SHELTER IMPACT

Youth served: **291**

Total number of nights spent at the shelter by individual youth: **9,794**

Youth engaged in education, employment, health, legal or housing placement assistance: **70%**



HOUSING IMPACT

Youth served: **177**

Total hours of case management provided through Housing: **2,691**

Youth maintaining housing for six months or longer: **88%**



EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT IMPACT

Youth served: **145**

Youth who made progress toward education goals: **85**

Youth who made progress toward employment goals: **123**



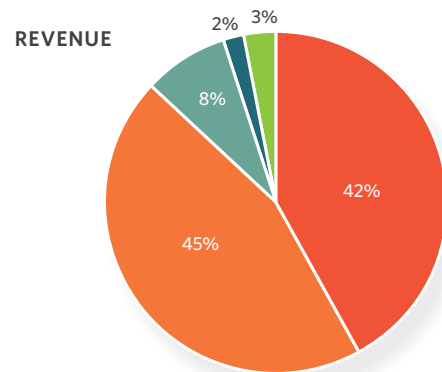
TOTAL YOUTH SERVED: 969

Restrictions due to COVID-19 limited the capacity of Urban Peak's Shelter and Drop-In Center during FY 2021.

Urban Peak by the Numbers: Financials

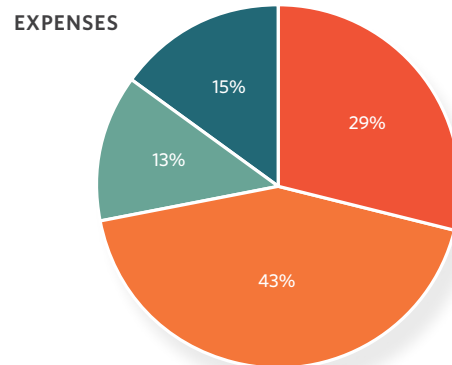
REVENUE

Contributions	\$ 3,861,911
Government Grants	\$ 4,146,485
PPP Loan Forgiveness	\$ 711,900
Investments & Other	\$ 182,389
Program & In-kind	\$ 282,048
Total Support	\$ 9,184,733



EXPENSES

Overnight Shelter	\$ 1,664,086
Housing Services	\$ 2,517,115
Peak Thrift, Ed & Emp	\$ 763,864
Outreach & DIC	\$ 886,523
Total Program Services	\$ 5,831,588
Gen & Admin	\$ 1,148,475
Fundraising	\$ 588,453
Total Supporting Services	\$ 1,736,928
Depreciation	\$ 291,099
Total Expenses	\$ 7,859,615



NET ASSETS

Change in Net Assets before Depreciation	\$ 1,616,217
Depreciation	\$ (291,099)
Change in Net Assets	\$ 1,325,118
Net Assets beginning of year	\$ 5,764,686
Net Assets end of year	\$ 7,089,804

we believe
in the responsible stewardship of our resources.

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 \$250 or more in Fiscal Year 2021. Our fiscal year is October 1 - September 30, 2021.

\$25,000+

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2021

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