

# **Prairie Family Center**

## **Annual Report 2023**



***Provide our community with the tools and resources to build, support,  
and educate healthy families.***

*Our mission, your success*

Prairie Family Center is a proud member of



Family Resource  
Center Association

## 2023 In Review

Prairie Family Center (PFC) just completed its 26th year of being blessed to serve the communities of Kit Carson County and surrounding communities in Cheyenne and Yuma counties. Throughout the year PFC was able to assist 525 families in our community with food and/or programming. Twenty families in need were able to be provided with clothing and/or housewares. The Mobile Pantry in partnership with Food Bank of the Rockies served an average of 225 families each month from the surrounding areas including community members from the counties of Kit Carson, Cheyenne, and Yuma. PFC continues to serve seniors monthly with senior commodities and in the past year on average eighty-two seniors received these. An additional seventy families on average a month receive assistance through the onsite food bank. With a generous grant from Hunger Free and state grant LFPA PFC was able to procure locally grown food including culture-responsive foods.

Programing from this past year includes the Nurturing-Parenting program as part of the Child Abuse Prevention Plan, Exploring Foods, Literacy for Little Ones, Ages and Stages, Positive Youth Development, Bilingual Parenting Class, Nurturing Fathers, Circle Talk for seniors, and this year a Mom Talk group was added in both English and Spanish. 106 children participated in Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs. The Summer Food program was able to serve seven thousand meals this year in Flagler, Stratton, and Burlington school districts. This year with the help of a grant from Delta Dental and a partnership with the Family Resource Association, PFC was able to refer eighty-seven families to dental care and eleven children received oral health treatment. Also new this year is a community garden and sensory path that PFC has begun to develop in the vacant lot purchased next to the main building. Included in the space are fruit trees, vine arches, and raised beds and troughs that house fruit and vegetable plants. Twenty families were helped with payment for past due utilities and thirty families filled out SNAP applications for food assistance.

PFC has consistently stayed on track with the budget during the past fiscal years, with the current year ending June 30, 2023. Changes in funding priorities, rising food costs, and overall economic challenges have impacted PFC and the community. For example, families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic were at risk of financial despair and the inability to provide necessities such as food and rent. This is where PFC began a progressive and ongoing case management/rental assistance program to offer to our community to assist and move families towards successful living. PFC continually searches for funding opportunities to continue to provide the programs that the community recognizes as needed.

## **2023 Success Story**

While PFC was able to help families within our community this past year, there is one client story that especially stands out. A mother came in for food after fleeing a severe domestic violence situation. She had run out of fuel and money in Burlington and a community member had recommended that she come to PFC for assistance. Sara House, a domestic violence resource, was able to meet with the client in our office and provide her with resources to help her begin in our community. The client has three children, and we were able to provide an Ages and Stages screening assessment for her children which led to a referral to BOCES for the youngest child to help him get into preschool. She has begun to attend the Mom Talk group and is currently participating in a Nurturing Parenting Class for parents with children with disabilities. This class is helping the client connect with her son.

## **Planning**

Deena Ziegler, PFC's Executive Director continues to be committed to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion through staff training and weekly mindful moments during the weekly staff meetings. In addition, trainings around homelessness, human trafficking, and food justice occur monthly. PFC has added a bilingual staff member as a family advocate and a staff member in the thrift store to be able to better serve the minority populations. The website, Facebook posts, brochures, and different applications have been translated into Spanish. PFC is currently collaborating with community partners to create a revised Child Abuse Prevention Plan expected to be finalized in the early spring of 2024.

Prairie Family Center's board conducts an annual Quality Standards Assessment which maintains our professional edge and meets our clients' needs where they are. The PFC board reviewed the current strategic plan as well as reviewed evaluations, surveys, and feedback from the Parent Advisory Council to make recommendations for changes and establish a new strategic plan. PFC expects to increase revenue through a highly diversified portfolio of a combination of government and foundational grants. This diversification is a platform that will sustain PFC's organizational well-being far into the future.

Prairie Family Center currently owns the building at 1040 Rose Avenue, the outlying buildings, and the adjacent land. PFC has painted most of the buildings and added a new garage door. The current building houses PFC offices, a thrift store, classrooms, an on-site food pantry, a board room, and a storage unit. This year PFC was able to

obtain an energy grant that allowed for the lights to be switched from traditional fluorescent to more efficient LED lights and a new energy-efficient fridge/freezer was purchased to replace an aging one. PFC is actively looking for grants to continue to update and replace refrigerators/freezers in the food bank and continue to update the adjacent lot that houses the community garden and sensory walkway as well as two onsite buildings.

### **Volunteers**

The volunteers who assist Praire Family Center help us to be successful. We consistently have fifty-plus volunteers each month during our monthly community food distribution ranging from students to seniors. We also have volunteers in our thrift store including residents of DDI with disabilities, who come in to learn work skills. PFC has volunteers who come to help load boxes of food into seniors' vehicles during our monthly Senior Commodity Food Program from Food Bank of the Rockies along with deliveries of food boxes to shut-ins. PFC is a family-based and family-oriented establishment where often staff members children and grandchildren bring smiles during our workdays.

### **PRAIRIE FAMILY CENTER PROGRAMS**

Prairie Family Center has added to our pillars to align with community needs. We also have become more equitable, diverse, and inclusive in our programs and support.

#### **Pillar 1: Early Childhood Education & Youth Development:**

\***Ages & Stages.** It is a social & emotional developmental screening tool that determines appropriate stages of development.

\***CATCH ECE** exercise program is fitness for preschool age children. CATCH is a K through fourth grade snack and physical activity program. Preschool CATCH was for the 3- and 4-year-old age group.

\***CATCH Dental** is an oral health program in partnership with Delta Dental. It teaches the importance of oral health to expectant mothers and children ages 0-5.

\***The Sensory Program** went through the summer where infants and toddlers were able to explore the senses through touch, taste, smell, and visuals. Included was the community garden where they could see produce growing and walk through grape arches.

\***Exploring Foods** is an innovative program that introduces new food groups to preschoolers, and pyramid training, and is also a vital social-emotional tool. Exploring Foods featured learning nutrition through trying new and different healthy foods.

\***Literacy for Little One's entitled Kaplan.** It is the country's leading scientifically based, comprehensive curricula to help plan and implement a developmentally appropriate program that promotes children's social-emotional development and learning in the core areas of literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies. The family development coordinator typically brings a lesson, a book, a craft, and an activity into childcare homes and facilities. This program is currently in its second year.

\***Summer Foods Program** provides breakfast and lunch during the summer months to local school districts.

### **Pillar 2: Access to Health Care and Adult Education:**

\*PFC helps the uninsured and underinsured gain access to adult and child health insurance. Bilingual support and assistance are available for SNAP/WIC/SS&D/Medicaid/LEAP applications.

\***Nurturing Parenting** which is a parenting class for families with children 0-5, school age, and adolescents which is taught in English and Spanish.

\***Circle Talk** for seniors reduces the isolation of this populace through a structured support group. Guided by a 13-module field-tested curriculum, these trained leaders facilitate groups in face-to-face environments. Each week, a thought-provoking theme is introduced with carefully selected poems, short stories, symbol cards, and other props, to inspire a lively discussion of shared memories and important life stories. New this year is a fall-based prevention program in partnership with the CSU Extension Office. A Spanish-speaking class is also new this year.

\***Mom Talk** in both English and Spanish was added using questions in the Nurturing Parenting curriculum as a starting point to discuss challenges facing stay-at-home moms and reduce isolation associated with being an at-home parent.

### **Pillar 3: Resource & Referral Services:**

PFC serves as a safety net for all at-risk families by providing basic needs and direct services or referrals to our collaboratives and partnerships. PFC has a partnership with the Food Bank of the Rockies, Kit Carson County

Department of Human Services (KCCDHS), and Burlington Activities Department for the use of the Community Center for our monthly food distribution. We receive referrals from the Collaborative Management Program (CMP) for families needing services from food to parenting classes. We are participating with In School Support teams to help families engage in community resources.

Other partnerships that Prairie Family Center engages in include Communities that Care (CTC), Interagency Organizational Group (IOG), and the Early Childhood Council of Washington, Yuma, and Kit Carson County. PFC also created a Parent Advisory Council with parents from our Mom Talk groups to assess community needs and develop future programming.

#### **Pillar 4: Emergency Services and Supports:**

PFC provides support via intakes, newsletters, social media, brochures, case management, and Google Translate all available in Spanish and English. PFC offers direct services to families in short-term crises. Families can receive assistance through our monthly food pantry on-site, a monthly food distribution sponsored by Food Bank of the Rockies, and clothing and houseware items through our Twice as Nice Thrift Store. PFC has provided fresh produce through our senior commodities and deliveries to seniors. A partnership with Energy Outreach Colorado provides payments for past-due utilities. Support for services in the areas of emergency trips to Denver and Colorado Springs such as gas cards, motel stays in Burlington, prescriptions, etc. through a partnership with the Salvation Army. Safeway has provided Christmas food gift cards through PFC. PFC provides SNAP (food stamps) application assistance which includes first-time appliers, recertifications and redeterminations, and change reports in 2023. PFC collaborates through Communities that Care Board Life Skills program, FEM (family engagement meetings), and ISST (In school support meetings), through collaboration with Kit Carson County Communities that Care.

The Community Market was held weekly on Friday nights and has booths for local entrepreneurs. Prairie Family Center continually strives to serve our community members and the underserved population to help them succeed in their lives. An onsite community garden allows PCF to provide fresh produce during the growing season for our food pantry. It also allows residents and children to learn how to grow fresh produce or take part in learning about caring for a garden of their own. Twice as Nice thrift store continues to see fresh faces and provides a unique shopping experience.

### **Prairie Family Center Grantor Recognition**

- **Anschutz Family Foundation**
- **AV Hunter**
- **Buell**
- **Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP)**
- **Cooper Clark**
- **Delta Dental**
- **Eastern Colorado Bank**
- **Energy Outreach Colorado**
- **Family Support Services (FSS)**
- **Family Resource Center Association (SNAP)**
- **Nourishing Neighbors**
- **Summer Foods**
- **Safeway/Albertsons**
- **West Plains**
- **Wolf Foundation**

\*Thank you for your support and for helping Prairie Family Center continue to be successful and able to provide vital resources to our community\*

**Prairie Family Center Board of Directors 2023**

- ✚ **Everett Moreland—Chairperson**
- ✚ **Noel Winfrey—Vice-Chairperson**
- ✚ **Burry Besse—Secretary**
- ✚ **Kindra Mulch—Treasurer**
- ✚ **Colleen Simon**
- ✚ **Austin Buchanan**
- ✚ **Lafe Murray**
- ✚ **Barb Rush**
- ✚ **Marge Murphy**

**Key Staff:**

**Deena Ziegler, Executive Director**

Danielle Herres, Bookkeeper, Grant Manager

Ginger Bandy, Family Advocate,

Kathy Lee, Early Childhood Coordinator

Kelli Bandy, Data Entry

Kelly Mullis, Family Advocate, Data Entry Specialist

Kobi Seymour, Family Advocate, Early Childhood Development Specialist

Rita Mandis, Family Advocate, Bilingual Advocate

Teresa Stuart, Thrift Store Advocate

Debbie Hilton-Delinsky, Thrift Store Advocate

Destinee Fernandez, Thrift Store Advocate

Manual Arias, Thrift Store Advocate, Bilingual Advocate

Samantha Stout, Thrift Store Advocate

PFC also employs several temporary, part-time employees to help facilitate various programs as necessitated.