



RISE ABOVE
COLORADO

Annual Report 2023

*Empowering youth to make healthy connections,
decisions, and change.*



Our Team

Note from Executive Director

Dear Friends,

One of the challenges of prevention work is that success is often the stories we don't hear about, the stories of youth doing great things and making healthy choices. Our job at Rise Above Colorado is to elevate that narrative while we continue giving youth the facts and skill development to overcome the challenges of being an adolescent in today's world.

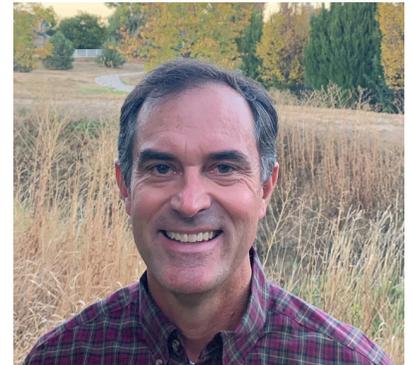
We're proud of the young people who help us lead this effort through our statewide Teen Action Council. We hope that Christopher's testimonial below provides you a snapshot of the impact our organization has on individual youth that they then turn into positive peer influence.

The past year saw Rise Above Colorado dive deep into fentanyl overdose prevention, with campaigns to inform adults about the scope of the problem and messaging to emphasize the importance of connection for youth to keep their friends safe from substances that may be contaminated with a lethal dose of fentanyl. We've been proud to work with leading Colorado foundation and Attorney General Phil Weiser on this effort.

So, as you peruse the highlights from 2023, know that whether you're a donor, community partner or a young person leading the way, we are grateful for all you do to help us empower Colorado youth.



Kent MacLennan, Executive Director



Staff

KENT MACLENNAN, Executive Director
BEN EDWARDS, Youth Engagement Manager
JENNA GARROW, Director of Prevention Education
JONATHAN JUDGE, Director of Media & Campaigns
REECE MARCELLO, Youth Partner
ANGELICA OCHOA, Youth Engagement Coordinator
LIZ SIELATYCKI, Manager of Communications & Community Partnership

Board of Directors

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KELSEY BURTON, Evermore Partners
DANA DURAN, Boys & Girls Clubs of Northwest CO
AMY GRAHAM, Pragmatic Marketing
JOSE ESQUIBEL, Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention
ANDREA MACIAS, Emily Griffith Technical College
DAVE SJERVEN, Transwest
STAZI SNELLING, Teens, Inc.
KIKI TRAYLOR, Amgen

Thank you for your service!

DARRICK CHRISTOPHER
Board Member 2015-2023



Thank you to our former Youth Partners, Maelah Robinson-Castillo and Kaole Vang, who moved on in 2023 but left a lasting mark on our organization.

Our Team

Note from Executive Teen

In Rise Above Colorado's Teen Action Council (TAC) I've learned a lot in terms of advocacy and my own personal skills... I was initially drawn to them because of their mission, to discourage substance abuse by reminding and shifting the perspective of teens to the positives. The focus on preventative measures drew me to Rise Above Colorado, and I still continue to support it with every atom of my being.

Don't wait until there's an addiction to care. Be proactive in preventing that addiction from developing. Being a part of TAC has helped me not only with advocating for preventative measures to substance addiction, but also with my personal social skills. The one thing that I'll take from TAC is to always keep my mind open to others and to have an optimistic view of others until proven guilty. I've learned this over the years by participating with others in difficult discussions that often spark heated debates. By learning to navigate difficult topics like substance abuse, gun violence, and mental health I've gained a better grasp of what inclusivity looks like and how productive discussion can include disagreement. I hope that in the future teens can learn to question everything they're presented with.

Critical thinking is especially necessary in modern times because of influences like social media and misinformation, and I hope that by leaving a lasting impact on others I can spark this curiosity. I sincerely believe that Rise Above Colorado's mission has positively impacted teens in my state. My friends have always been curious as to what organization I volunteer at, and I always greet them with a smile and can proudly say "Rise Above Colorado."



Christopher Chen
Teen Action Council
2020-2024

Teen Action Council (TAC)



"Being in TAC made me realize how much I love creating change and advocacy for others, and that I'm not alone in that passion. I also learned that just because I'm a teen doesn't mean I don't have the power to create massive, meaningful change. I love this work and I hope to continue it."

CHRISTOPHER CHEN, Thornton (Executive Teen)
ALLISON DAME, Littleton (Executive Teen)
ALIYAH ACEVEDO, Commerce City (Executive Teen)
LYLI ALCOVER-MATSUDA, Littleton
RIKO BURROWS, Broomfield
AKELIA CALKINS, Grand Junction
DOLORES CASTILLO, Pueblo
SAVANNAH COCHRAN, Lakewood
DEREK GARCIA, Denver
OLIVYR HOCKER, Alamosa
SABA KORD, Broomfield
RYAN LEMLEY, Bayfield
CAITLIN MCCRADY, CO Springs
SAMANTHA MORALES JURADO, Westminster
ADITYA NANDYAL, Broomfield
AVALON PARLIN, Evans
AAHANA PAUL, CO Springs
GIANG PHAM, Denver
KENIA RODRIGUEZ, Denver
ABIONA ROZALES, Denver
WILLOW SCHULZ, Ignacio
SUYASH SHRESTHA, Thornton
CASSIE SMITH, Loma
GHAIDA TAGALASFIA, Denver
CALVIN TIMMERS, Littleton
AARAV VARMA, Parker

Campaigns & Partnerships

The Connect Effect

Fentanyl overdose continues to be a major concern for Coloradans of all ages. This is why we are proud of our work in 2023 on the opioid and fentanyl prevention campaign out of Attorney General Phil Weiser's office, *The Connect Effect*. We worked with media agency SE2 to test messaging and creative design with youth across Colorado from Craig to Lamar, and helped launch the campaign by hosting a youth panel at the AG's annual Opioid Abatement Conference in Montrose (see photo). This campaign uses positive social norming and harm reduction messages to provide youth and parents with support and conversation starters to foster deeper connections.

Check out the campaign, with English and Spanish materials, at ConnectEffectCO.org!



Source: Statewide poll of Colorado teens, 2023

We know the risks of misusing pills because a lot of pills are fake and laced with fentanyl. When we see a friend in danger, we support them.

You have the power to save a life. See how at ConnectEffectCO.org

CONNECT EFFECT

An part of the Connect Effect

What is Our Plan?



5280 HIGH SCHOOL + RISE ABOVE COLORADO MAYORAL FORUM

YOUTH-LED, YOUTH-FOCUSED
Join 5280 High School students to discuss the issues that matter most to them, such as mental health, fentanyl and school-based violence.

THURSDAY, MARCH 16
2-3 PM
1200 W MISSISSIPPI AVE



Questions? E-mail Sydney Melson at sydney@coprovidersassociation.org.

Thanks to The Anschutz Foundation and support from the Daniels Fund and El Pomar Foundation, we launched *What Is Our Plan* to build knowledge about the issue with parents, educators and voters in Denver and Colorado Springs. Alongside 5280 High School and Colorado Providers Association, in March 2023 we were proud to co-host a mayoral forum with 12 Denver candidates to discuss the issue directly with youth.

Fentanyl kills more people than car crashes + homicides combined

What Is Denver's Plan?

WhatIsOurPlan.org



Campaigns & Partnerships

Fill Your World With Good

Our 2023 positive social norming campaign, *Fill Your World With Good*, achieved 9 MILLION impressions across social media, spreading our message that **MOST teens AREN'T using drugs or alcohol**. We also created a video of our Milliken mural (from the front page) which reached 188,933 views. We implemented a successful new strategy this year, creating localized social media ads to increase reach and association within each of our positive norming communities, listed to the right. Collective impact helps us all be successful!

Thank you to our partners who did this Positive Community Norming work alongside us!

- Broomfield City & County
- Clear Creek County
- Denver Public Schools
- Jefferson County Communities That Care
- La Plata County Public Health
- Northwest Partners
- Prowers County Public Health

To learn more about positive community norming, check out the amazing work of The Montana Institute at www.montanainstitute.com!



Outreach

Youth Engagement

Statewide Teen Action Council (TAC): members were trained this year to administer the overdose reversal medicine, Narcan (Naloxone). The training was delivered by youth from partners in Northwest Colorado, who have become excellent trainers themselves. TAC continued to serve as ambassadors for our resources by delivering our educational lessons to 147 of their peers and empowering other teens to make healthy connections, decisions, and change. We've also continued to grow our TAC Alumni Network!

Denver TAC: members partnered with youth from the following Public Health Institute at Denver Health organizations: EYE for Prevention, PATCH, and Youth Pride Coalition. They presented their combined efforts for substance misuse prevention and increased health and well-being for young people.

DSST College View High School (SW Denver): student interns spread awareness of substance misuse and mental health information to their communities. They conducted research and created infographics that shared prevention information that resonated with them. They also created an art-activated design installation in their school that shared positive messages and additional prevention information.

Prowers County & Green Mountain High School: Students utilized our Lead The Change resource to address issues in their communities. In Prowers county, youth developed a plan to provide essentials to those in need in their community. At Green Mountain High School in Lakewood, students created a brochure focused on understanding and addressing microaggressions, which was displayed at the Shared Risk and Protective Factor Conference in June 2023 in Keystone.

Educational Resources

11,707 youth

were reached by our educational lessons in 2023

Closing The Gap – Correcting Misperceptions

In 2023 we added discussion prompts around confirmation bias and honed skill-building components for youth around observing, questioning and interpreting data in order to have more informed and accurate perceptions to make healthier decisions.

Not Prescribed – Rx Drug Misuse Prevention

We leveraged our newest chapter, "Fentanyl & Counterfeit Pills," to support Attorney General Weiser's statewide fentanyl prevention efforts. We're grateful for the continued efforts of partners like Western Colorado AHEC, who help us reach a high number of youth each year through their direct facilitation of our resources.

Post-retrospective survey data shows that youth who participated in this resource increased their knowledge and perceptions of risk of using prescription drugs.

23% → 67%

of students felt they had "a lot of knowledge" of the dangers of fentanyl and/or counterfeit pills before vs. after participating in our Not Prescribed lesson

39% → 83%

of students felt that trying a prescription pain reliever that a doctor did not prescribe them was "very harmful or risky" before vs. after our Not Prescribed lesson

Financial Overview

Gifts in Tribute

We deeply appreciate those donors who have made gifts in honor of someone whose lives have been touched by our work, those taken by addiction and overdose, and also celebrating those in recovery.

In that spirit, we pay tribute to the following individuals who left this world too soon:

- Natalie Dickinson
- William Robert Dravland
- Tyler Vincent Merthen
- Marciano (*last name withheld for privacy*)

Endowment

\$48,603

Launched in 2020, Rise Above Colorado's endowment enables supporters to invest in the future of the organization to ensure its impact empowering our state's youth. Our endowment has grown to \$48,603 as of December 31, 2023, a 6.6% growth from 2022.

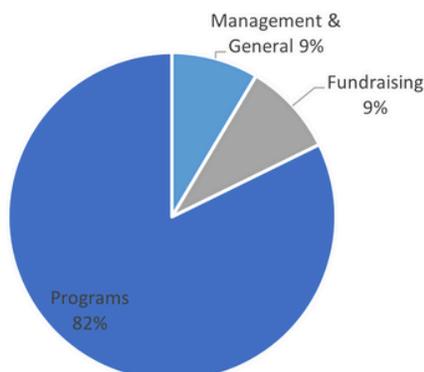
If you're interested in making an endowment or legacy gift to Rise Above Colorado, we'd be honored to talk with you! Please contact Executive Director Kent MacLennan (kent@riseaboveco.org) for more info!

Revenue & Expenses

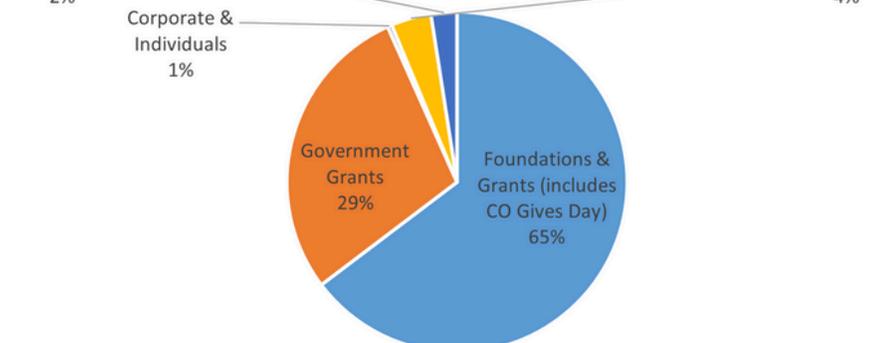
In 2023, we continued to implement our campaigns and programs with our teens and partnering communities amidst a challenging fundraising environment. Expenses exceeded revenue for the first time in 7 years, but the organization remains in good financial health with strong prospects for 2024.

Our Total Net Assets are **\$1,179,255*** as of December 31, 2023. This includes Board Designated Reserves of \$682,997.

Expenses by Category- \$1,702,469



2023 Revenue by Source- \$1,446,851



* Fully audited financials available by summer 2024

Art-Driven Prevention

Murals

Morey Middle School, Denver – With help from partners in Denver Public Schools, we launched a contest across the district with our Fill Your World With Good campaign. Students from the winning school painted the first mural below.

The Cracked Egg, Milliken – We worked with some amazing teens to paint the second mural, sponsored by Milliken Communities That Care.



Teen Poster Workshops

Our interactive poster workshops utilize art to raise awareness and facilitate dialogue about teen mental health and substance use prevention.

In 2023 we facilitated these across the state in the following communities: Broomfield, Denver, Durango, Lamar, Wheatridge, Craig, and Steamboat Springs.

