



DOUGLAS COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Community Connection

Oct - Dec 2022

NEWSLETTER

DIA DE LOS MUERTOS

Douglas County Community Foundation's inaugural fundraising gala was held at the beautiful Haven in the Pines in November. Respectfully embracing the Dia de los Muertos theme, community members, nonprofit partners, as well as DCCF board and committee members, gathered in the spirit with colorful face paint and traditional "Day of the Dead" attire.

More than 25 Douglas County corporate partners sponsored the event and over 100 additional businesses participated through donated items like golf at the exclusive Sanctuary, a trip to Costa Rica, a signed George Strait guitar, sports tickets and memorabilia - and many other auction items.

The Foundation raised nearly \$80,000 at the event, which will be used to support nonprofits in Douglas County.



Colorado Gives Day

Douglas County residents showed up in a big way to support local nonprofits for Colorado Gives Day on December 6th.

More than \$1,383,208.25 was raised from 6,436 donations benefiting the 105 participating Douglas County nonprofit organizations - 19 of which were new participants.

"As the regional champion for the single largest statewide online giving event, DCCF is grateful for those who supported the 'Every [fill in the blank] Matters' campaign," said Executive Director, Mike Waid. "Our nonprofit partners appreciate you."

To learn more about Colorado Gives Day, visit dccb.org/GivesDay.

Do you or your business purchase through Amazon?

When you sign up for AmazonSmile, choose Douglas County Community Foundation as the nonprofit you support. For eligible purchases, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the total purchase price to DCCF!



Nonprofit profile - Johnny's Ambassadors



It's been more than three years since Johnny died; he was just 19 years old. The pain and grief are still raw and palpable for his mom, Laura Stack. Her son was a typical kid growing up in Highlands Ranch. He ran cross country and track, played the piano and guitar, was happy and charming, held a 4.0 GPA, was a math genius and loved teaching

Sunday school to little ones at church. "He was a great kid. He could have been any of our kids," she shared tearfully.

After Johnny's passing, his mom stayed in bed for six months. Then, her mission to turn tragedy into meaning and impact began. Laura and her husband, John, created Johnny's Ambassadors, a nonprofit dedicated to educating parents, teens and communities about the dangers of today's high potency THC products on adolescent brains. Laura travels the country to share their message, and an army of ambassadors help spread the word.

In 2014, when Johnny was a freshman in high school, he was first introduced to marijuana at a party. By all



Johnny Stack and his mom, Laura, are all smiles during a spring break trip to Maui in March 2016. Laura has made it her life's mission to share Johnny's story through the nonprofit, Johnny's Ambassadors.

accounts, Laura was grateful her son spoke to her about the usage and was relieved it wasn't something more serious. She thought, "Thank God it's just weed."

The Stacks believed, like many people, that marijuana is the harmless plant users have smoked for decades. However, they learned that plants today are being cultivated with significantly higher levels of THC. Beyond the traditional weed flower, THC is also turned into other ultra-concentrated products, like dabs, vapes and oils, through chemical processes. "These are not plants," said Laura. "They are chemicals with very high potency levels."

Laura can cite volumes of statistics about marijuana types, potencies, usage and addictive qualities, as well as correlations to brain damage, depression, psychosis and suicidal ideations in teens. Her message is simple: There is no safe level of THC in the development of the mind of a teen, and it is critical to delay (or avoid altogether) usage until brains are fully formed.

Last year, Colorado passed House Bill 21-1317 requiring dispensaries to share product potency levels, limit product size amounts, limit the number of grams available for daily purchase, track sales across dispensaries, and require two doctors to independently certify the need for a medical marijuana card for the 18 to 20 year-old population. (This age group can only purchase with a medical card, and these individuals are usually the source for younger teens obtaining access). According to Laura, since the bill went into effect, medical marijuana sales have dropped by 49% compared to last year, which she feels is a huge win to protect youth.

Three days before Johnny died by suicide, he said to her, "You were right, Mom. Marijuana has ruined my mind and my life." And, with that, Laura committed, "I will never stop trying to tell people. It's my life's work."

Johnny's Ambassadors maintains a host of resources for children and families struggling with marijuana usage. Visit johnnysambassadors.org and click "Partners." Then, "Find Help For Your Child" to learn more. If you or someone you know is in need of help, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at SuicidePreventionLifeline.org or call 1-800-273-8255. **In an emergency situation, always call 911.**

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Foundation and Douglas County partnership awards \$100,000 in Philip S. Miller grants



In October, DCCF awarded 16 grants to local nonprofit organizations totaling \$100,000. Eight organizations received part of \$80,000 in grants, which were awarded to nonprofits that provide a mental health focus in Douglas County. Additionally, \$20,000 in grants were awarded to eight other Douglas County nonprofits to help support missions serving our community. Congratulations to the following mental health grant

recipients: The Happy Crew; Crisis Center; Second Wind Fund; Promise Ranch; Aging Resources of Douglas County; Healing Hounds; Douglas County Christian Counseling; Edwards Foundation for Rescued Animals. General Grant recipients were Backpack Society; Help & Hope Center; Lady Trailblazers; Best Buddies in Colorado; From Silence to Saved; Wellspring Community; Advocates for Children CASA; and Hope's Promise.

DCCF works diligently to assist local nonprofits, of all sizes, thrive in their missions. "This is how we serve our community," said Mike Waid, Executive Director of DCCF. "We bring together donor partners who entrust us as stewards of their financial gifts with worthy and vetted local Douglas County nonprofit organizations to make a real difference in our community and help those in need."

Update – Impact at local high schools

In June, DCCF awarded Johnny's Ambassadors (*see previous page*) a \$7,000 mental health grant to fund student assembly presentations on "The Dangerous Truths About Today's Marijuana" at three Douglas County high schools.

"It was a dream come true to speak to the [freshman] students at Rock Canyon," said Johnny's Ambassador Founder, Laura Stack. Her son, Johnny, who died by suicide at age 19, was a 2018 graduate of Rock Canyon High School (RCHS).

Principal Andy Abner stated, "Laura's message is packed with convincing data and research that both parents and students can relate to, and she presents the information in a compassionate and humble way." He continued, "While I am the principal, my freshman son was able to attend the presentation. He and I discussed Laura's story at length. It was clear to me that her message was impactful to him."

According to Mr. Abner, a school counselor approached him the day following the student presentation and shared a story about a student who came to the counselor concerned about a friend who was headed down a

dangerous path with marijuana. The counselor felt better able to intervene effectively as a result of the presentation, and said that it may have made a big difference for the student. Mr. Abner has invited Johnny's Ambassadors back next year to present again.



Laura Stack teaches high school students learn about the dangers of THC products.

In addition to the December 8 class assembly, which approximately 900 students attended, Laura has presentations scheduled in early 2023 for the junior class at ThunderRidge High School and the entire student body at Chaparral High School.

"I'm so grateful to the Douglas County Community Foundation for providing a grant to Johnny's Ambassadors which will allow us to give these educational presentations," stated Laura. "We will be able to visit several schools and impact the lives of thousands of teens!"

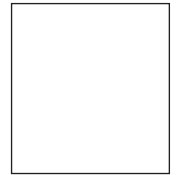
Looking to engage and give to your community?

Douglas County is a beautiful place to call home and a great place to operate a business. For those feeling fortunate to live or work in such an exceptional place, here are some ways in which you can support your community:

- Sponsor a Douglas County Community Foundation event
- Establish a monthly, recurring contribution (in any amount)
- Contribute to the Community Emergency Relief Fund
- Leave a legacy donation through a Donor Advised Fund
- Create a Family Endowment Fund
- Volunteer to be on a committee

- Please visit DCCF.org

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Special thanks to our donor partners:

Douglas County Community Foundation is committed to responsibly managing philanthropic contributions, maintaining agile funds for emergencies, inspiring generosity and providing support to local nonprofit organizations serving the needs within our community.