



# PARTNERSHIP OF DOUGLAS COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

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## 2019 ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE PARTNERSHIP OF DOUGLAS COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

In big things and little things, the entities of the Partnership of Douglas County Governments worked together in 2019 to ensure our communities continue to be great places to live and work.

Those partners are Douglas County Government, Town of Castle Rock, City of Castle Pines, Douglas County Libraries, Douglas County School District, Highlands Ranch Metro District, Town of Larkspur, City of Lone Tree, and Town of Parker.

Tonight I am only able to highlight a few community collaborations. You will find copies of the full list on your tables, and it will be posted on the partnership website.



### COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND SERVICES

- **DCSD Alternative Education School and Innovation Campus – Parker:** Following the passage of a \$250 million Douglas County School District bond (November, 2018), DCSD partnered with the Town of Parker and Douglas County Board of County Commissioners on the campus site for a new Alternative Education School and Innovation Campus in Parker.
- **Sturm Collaboration Campus:** August 16, 2019, marked the grand opening of the Sturm Collaboration Campus in Castle Rock. The campus will bring together education, business, and community to create a unique resource for delivering seamless education and workforce training to Castle Rock and greater Douglas County. Colorado State University offers classes at the Campus, and along with Douglas County School District, has a presence at the Campus. DCSD and CSU will partner with Arapahoe Community College to offer pathways for students to receive a high school diploma, associate's degree, and bachelor's degree. The project is a joint venture among Arapahoe Community College, the Town of Castle Rock, the Castle Rock Economic Development Council, Colorado State University System, and the Douglas County School District.
- **Community of Care Network:** The Community of Care Network hosted two **Strive to Thrive resource and service fairs**. Calvary Castle Rock hosted the first event on January 29, 2019, and Cherry Hills Community Church hosted the second event on July 23, 2019. More than 45 partner organizations were present to serve the 518 residents who attended the two events. A unique partnership with the Foundation for Douglas County Schools provided school supplies for families in need and distributed 287 backpacks at the summer Strive to Thrive.
- **Douglas County Library Training:** Douglas County partnered with the Douglas County Sheriff's Office to provide **crisis intervention training** to more than 90 Douglas County Libraries staff, over three sessions. As a part of this training, the Community Services Supervisor provided guidance on how to support library patrons who may be experiencing a crisis due to homelessness.
- **Winter Shelter Network:** From November, 2018, through March, 2019, seven churches in Parker, Castle Rock, Lone Tree, and Douglas County provided rest, meals, and connection for women and children experiencing homelessness. During its third season of operation, the Winter Shelter Network provided 1,320 bed-nights of shelter and 3,960 meals.

- **Adult Services:** Douglas County, the Seniors' Council, and Douglas County School District celebrated Grandparent's Day by hosting two Intergenerational Conversations for Grandparents and their Grandchildren. Over 65 people participated. The half-day events included an interactive dialog highlighting the importance of the bond between these two age groups and a panel of students who shared what they liked to do when visiting their grandparents.
- **Douglas County Community Foundation (DCCF):** For a second year, Douglas County contributed \$100,000 in Philip S. Miller funds to DCCF, through a Memorandum of Understanding, to enhance the lives of County residents. In 2019, DCCF championed Colorado Gives Day and secured 2,454 donors for Douglas County nonprofits. The DCCF established a Hearts and Hands fund to increase contributions distributed to local nonprofits and support efforts to strengthen the community-wide safety net that protects vulnerable residents and promotes self-sufficiency. During this initial year, the Hearts and Hands fund received \$52,800 in funding requests. The grant selection committee awarded \$23,700 to eight local nonprofits in support of nutrition, safe homes, and mental health programs.
- **Highlands Ranch Metro District:** HRMD continued its **Joint Use Agreements for Elementary School Field Use** and Shea Stadium with the Douglas County School District. HRMD enhances/maintains the fields in exchange for programming use after school hours.
- **School Land Dedication and Site Disposal:** Staff from Planning Services and the Douglas County School District coordinated on several projects this year, including charter school updates, school land dedication review methodologies, and surplus school site disposal. Staff from the two entities have established a system of regular meetings and ongoing communication to address school-related issues early in the development review process. This year's major collaborative effort focused on evaluating alternative uses for surplus school land dedicated to the County through its subdivision process. The outcome has been a strategy for putting these sites to alternative use for the benefit of both the District and surrounding community.
- **Art Encounters:** Douglas County continues to partner with the Highlands Ranch Cultural Affairs Association, Towns of Castle Rock and Parker, Douglas County Libraries, and the Roxborough Arts Council on the Art Encounters public art program. For the 2019-2020 program year, 26 sculptures have been installed throughout the county. Each participating organization has members who serve on the Art Encounters Public Art Advisory Committee to select the sculptures for the upcoming program year. Additionally, organizations work with artists to secure contracts and install sculptures for a one-year period. A portion of the funds that support this program come from the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD). As the Town of Castle Rock is not within the SCFD, and Douglas County Libraries is not eligible to receive SCFD funds, they set aside other funding sources to participate.
- With grant support from the Douglas County Developmental Disabilities Mill Levy, the Lone Tree Arts Center (LTAC) welcomes hundreds of families in Douglas County to experience the performing arts through **Sensory Friendly programs**. LTAC presents a signature series of low-cost, professional performances, increasing accessibility and inclusiveness for families who have traditionally felt excluded as arts patrons. In addition, the Mill Levy supports LTAC's unique usher training program, which helps Douglas County adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities gain transferable work and social skills through meaningful volunteer experience.
- **International Archaeology Day:** On October 19, 2019, Douglas County historic preservation staff and volunteers participated in International Archaeology Day. This annual event is held in partnership with History Colorado, Colorado Parks & Wildlife, Roxborough State Park, Lamb Spring Archeological Preserve, Roxborough Area Historical Society, and Ken Caryl Ranch Historical Society. This event highlighted the historical and archeological resources of the Roxborough area. Tours and events allowed visitors to learn about the Lamb Spring Archaeological Preserve, Miksch Helmer Cabin, and other archaeological sites in Douglas County.
- **Home Rule Special Election:** In May, 2019, Castle Pines held a Special Election to move to Home Rule. The city partnered with the Town of Castle Rock to **share ballot counting equipment** for the mail ballot election. On May 14, 2019, Castle Pines successfully became a Home Rule City.

- Partnering with Highlands Ranch Metro District to find space, Douglas County Libraries needs were largely accommodated by Highlands Ranch Community Association for **continued library programming** such as Storytime and Battle of the Books, during the four-month renovation and closure of Ranch library. The renovation set the library up for the next decade of service.
- Ever advocates for civic engagement, Douglas County Libraries partnered with the Douglas County elections office to offer **ballot drop boxes** at Castle Pines and Roxborough libraries.
- As communities grow, the **shared-space** partnership between the City of Castle Pines and Douglas County Libraries at Castle Pines continues to allow investment to right-size against growth in fiscally responsible ways. The November 2019 partnership meeting will be hosted by the City of Castle Pines in the shared Castle Pines Master Association Event Hall.



## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- The Department of Human Services recently partnered with The Tennyson Center for Children and the Douglas County School District to provide **preventative services to children**. The hope is that by providing crisis and non-crisis therapeutic services to families in need, we may prevent them from becoming involved with the child welfare system and/or needing more drastic interventions.
- A partnership with the Department of Human Services and Catholic Charities of Central Colorado, Castle Rock, provides **innovative case management**, along with **financial support**, to families with a primary goal of sustaining quality child care while gaining self-sufficiency.
- The Mental Health Initiative now has four **Community Response Teams** (CRT), serving Douglas County through a unique co-responder program that pairs law enforcement with a mental health clinician, to respond to calls that are principally mental health in nature.
  - Three community-based teams and a newly formed Youth CRT respond in schools.
  - CRT partners include Douglas County, Douglas County Sheriff's Office, Castle Rock PD, Parker PD, Castle Rock Fire and Rescue, South Metro Fire and Rescue, and clinical provider Caring Communities of Colorado. Youth CRT partners include the County, DCSO officers plus School Resource Officers, DCSD, DC Human Services and Caring Communities in coordination with the three community CRT teams. Lone Tree PD also makes referrals to the CRT.
  - Since May 2017, CRTs have had 3,384 encounters, including 1,194 calls for 911 service. In 60-65% of cases, people are treated in place; there have been 523 emergency department and 192 jail saves. Arrival of a CRT has enabled the release of 1,851 patrol officers and 333 fire employees back into service.
- The Mental Health Initiative** is in the process of implementing a Blueprint for a Community-based Mental Health System, to address gaps in services, promote prevention, address mental health stigma, and strengthen crisis services to support CRT teams. The Initiative has 40+ organizational members and includes each of the nine organizational members of the Partnership of Douglas County Governments.



## SAFETY

- Douglas County, the Sheriff's Office and the Douglas County School District partnered to dramatically improve school safety through the addition of five deputies as middle school **School Resource Officers** (SROs), a juvenile crime detective, four deputies as full-time SROs for elementary schools in unincorporated Douglas County, and two SROs for K-12 charter schools. A deputy was also added to the mental health Community Response Team (CRT) to better directly help youth/ students suffering from mental health crises, and to reduce the drain on medical, mental health, and human services.

- The Douglas County Board of Commissioners formed the **Physical School Safety & Protection Funding Committee** and the **Supportive Mental Health for Students Funding Committee**. Key partners of these committees included Douglas County School District, charter and private schools in Douglas County, Douglas County law enforcement, and citizens with expertise in physical school safety and mental health. These committees provided recommendations for expenditures directly related to the physical security and protection of the school community and buildings; determined what supportive school mental health and social-emotional initiatives, programs, services, and approaches really work; and recommended those that could be supported, expanded, or implemented with one-time funding from the County in partnership with the schools and the community.
- The Sheriff's Office partnered with the Douglas County School District to obtain radio hardware and develop new coordinated emergency radio procedures and training to ensure more effective **communication during emergencies that affect schools**.
- The Sheriff's Office upgraded RMS, CMS, JMS, and Field Reporting software to **improve in Cad-to-Cad interfaces** with Parker Police and South Metro Fire Rescue (METCOM), to improve communications and reduce response times.
- The Sheriff's Office implemented a long-term solution, supported by DC Information Technology, to ensure sustainability and upgrades to the **Sex Offender Tracking and Registration Program (SOTAR)**, used by Castle Rock Police, Parker Police, Lone Tree Police, and 90+ other agencies.
- The Sheriff's Office is completing a hardware procurement process and coordinating installation to allow **video-based connectivity between the Douglas County Jail and municipal courts** in Castle Rock, Parker, Lone Tree, and Littleton, so inmates can attend court via video, saving time and money by no longer physically driving inmates to and from court for each hearing.
- Douglas County, the Sheriff's Office and Castle Rock Police partnered with Parker Police to add a Parker Police officer to the **mental health Community Response Team**, to better directly help people suffering from mental crisis and reduce the drain on other medical, mental health, and human services.
- The Sheriff's Office partnered with Castle Rock Police, Parker Police, and Lone Tree Police to form a **regional crime scene investigator team** to better serve the changing needs of the region and reduce future costs by sharing resources.
- Castle Rock police partners with Douglas County Sheriff's office in a **joint property/evidence unit**, and partners with area police/sheriff for multi-jurisdictional teams and Rocky Mountain Regional Computer Forensics Laboratory.
- Castle Rock Police partners with Douglas County School District to provide **School Resource Officers** at Castle View High School, Mesa Middle School, and Castle Rock Middle School, and additionally provides School Marshal Officers for elementary schools in Castle Rock.
- Castle Rock Fire and Rescue Department continues with a strong partnership in the Douglas County Emergency Operations Center for **emergency services dispatch** and related services.
- 2019 "Bomb Cyclone" Rescue:** On March 13, 2019, an intense, powerful, and ferocious bomb cyclone blizzard pummeled Colorado and halted travel. With closed roads between Denver and Colorado Springs, Douglas County was isolated and hundreds of drivers became stranded in their vehicles. Douglas County Sheriff's Office, the Colorado State Department of Transportation, and Douglas County School District immediately organized a Rescue Task Force. While public works employees plowed paths, school buses and patrol units followed behind to rescue stranded motorists and transport them to one of four shelters. More than 700 people were transported to shelters as part of these rescue efforts.



## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

- **Rueter-Hess Hikes:** Starting in October, 2019, and running through April, 2020, Douglas County began offering monthly guided hikes at Rueter-Hess Reservoir. These hikes offer the public access to a recreation opportunity not previously available. The hikes are made possible through the approval of the Rueter-Hess Recreation Authority, which includes the Towns of Parker and Castle Rock, the Cities of Lone Tree and Castle Pines, Douglas County, and the Parker Water and Sanitation District. Additionally, the authority offered 14 paddle days in 2019.
- The official grand opening of the newest extension of the **East West Regional Trail** took place on Saturday, October 12, 2019. The recently completed 2.5-mile segment runs from the Schweiger Ranch Trailhead to the Cabela's Drive connector trail west of I-25. Successful completion of this project relied on the collaboration of many partners including CDOT, the City of Lone Tree, the Town of Parker, Rampart Range Metro District, RidgeGate Investments, Schweiger Ranch Foundation, and Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO).
- The new regional **High Plains Trail** project is a joint effort between Arapahoe County, Parker, Aurora, Douglas County, and the E-470 Authority. The trail's western expansion and connection with the Cherry Creek Regional Trail will fill a major gap in the metro area trail system. Seven miles of the High Plains Trail currently run along E-470, but the existing trail is relatively isolated from the rest of the metro trail network. The new one-mile connection will divert away from the highway and cross through what will be the Kings Point and Kings Point South housing developments in Aurora along the Arapahoe and Douglas County line. It will connect with Cherry Creek Regional Trail and Centennial Trail at Norton Farms Open Space. Arapahoe County recently received a \$2,005,000 grant from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) to help complete this project.
- **The High Line Canal Trail Plan** represents a partnership among the High Line Canal Conservancy, Denver Water, Douglas County and other municipalities along the canal. Highlands Ranch Metro District is a paying member of the Conservancy and maintains 6.5 miles of the trail. Douglas County is considering building a trail underpass where the canal crosses Santa Fe.
- **Central Park:** Highlands Ranch Metro District partnered with Douglas County for construction/maintenance. Douglas County built and maintains the "Triple Sticks" communication tower in the park.
- Douglas County partnered with the Town of Castle Rock on a Great Outdoors Colorado "Connect Initiative" grant application for construction of an additional portion of the **Colorado Front Range Trail** that would add nearly five miles of paved trail within the Town and a short segment of soft-surface trail on Lowell Ranch within unincorporated Douglas County. The County committed to construct the soft-surface portion of the trail on Lowell Ranch, which is allowed by the conservation easement held by Douglas Land Conservancy. The Town of Castle Rock was awarded \$2,008,000 for the project.
- Partnered with Clear Sky Elementary for the **6-week Life Science** camping unit, providing wildlife props, educational material, and assistance to teach all students in the school about Douglas County wildlife, habitats, and appropriate human behavior when encountering local wildlife.
- Partnered with a teacher from Ponderosa High School to conduct her advanced **Zoology II** spring class in the field at Prairie Canyon Ranch. Students tested, documented and mapped the ranch's aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, changes in the seasons, emergence of organisms, and influences of humans and domestic animals. A final report was created and presented to Douglas County personnel.





## TRANSPORTATION

- **Chambers Road Widening Project (Lincoln to Mainstreet):** This \$5.5 million project widened Chambers from a 2-lane to a 4-lane arterial between Main Street and Lincoln Avenue, and included intersection improvements at both Lincoln Avenue and Cosmopolitan Circle. Funding partners include Douglas County, Sierra Ridge development, and a potential reimbursement of \$1.4 million from the Town of Parker (related to development moving forward south of the Stonegate development). Construction began in summer, 2018, and was completed in August, 2019.
- **RidgeGate Widening (between I-25 and Meridian Village Parkway):** This project involves widening RidgeGate from 2 to 4 thru lanes for the segment within the City of Lone Tree. Funding partners for this project include: \$17 million from Rampart Range Metropolitan District, \$6.4 million via the DRCOG's previous Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) project selection process, \$2.5 million from the Southeast Public Improvement Metropolitan District (SPIMD), and \$2.5 million from Douglas County. The City of Lone Tree is managing the project; construction began in spring, 2019, and is anticipated to be completed in 2021 (the project was significantly delayed in 2019 due to nesting bald eagles).
- **County Line Road / I-25 Operational Improvements:** This project focuses on reducing current and long-term congestion and making safety and mobility improvements on the segment of County Line Road between Chester Street and Inverness Parkway. This project is divided into two major construction phases, namely (1) improvements west of I-25 and (2) improvements east of I-25. Project financial partners include Park Meadows Metro District, CDOT, Centennial, Inverness Metro Improvement District, Arapahoe County, Southeast Public Improvement Metropolitan District (SPIMD), and Douglas County. Additionally, the City of Lone Tree managed the construction of the west side improvements that occurred over the past three summers and were completed in summer, 2019. Douglas County is managing the design and construction of the east side improvements that require significant additional right-of-way and utility relocations, which will primarily occur in 2020 so that construction can get underway in 2021.
- **Founders Parkway and Allen Way Intersection Improvements:** This \$2.65 million project involves making traffic operational improvements at this congested intersection and to the nearby I-25 northbound on-ramp. Project funding partners include \$250,000 from Douglas County, \$408,000 from Castle Rock, \$412,000 from CDOT, and \$1,584,000 in federal funds via the DRCOG TIP project selection process. Construction began summer, 2019, and should be complete early 2020 (pending weather).
- **DRCOG – Douglas County Sub-regional Transportation Forum:** Eligible participating members include Lone Tree, Castle Rock, Parker, Castle Pines, Larkspur, Littleton, Aurora, and Douglas County. In September, 2018, all agencies except Aurora signed a Memorandum of Understanding, agreeing to participate in the 2018/2019 DRCOG's TIP Project Selection Process. In spring, 2019, the Forum submitted a list of projects to the DRCOG Board requesting funding totaling \$22.8 million for projects throughout the County (funding available in 2020 through 2023 via this DRCOG's TIP Project Selection Process). In August, 2019, the DRCOG Board approved our list of project funding requests which included the following:

- \$1,250,000 for NEPA/design for I-25/Lincoln Avenue Traffic Mobility Improvements
- \$855,000 for design/ROW for US 85 widening between SH 67 and Castle Rock Pkwy
- \$375,000 for constructing the High Plains Trail Connection near SH 83 grade separation
- \$5,500,000 for constructing County Line Road widening (University to Broadway)
- \$4,225,000 for design and reconstructing SH 86/5th Street/Ridge Road/Founders
- \$1,750,000 for constructing SH 83 operational improvements from Lincoln to E-470
- \$5,500,000 for constructing safety and operational improvements SH 83 to El Paso County
- \$2,000,000 for constructing C-470 Trail grade separation at Acres Green Drive
- \$400,000 for constructing pedestrian improvements in Larkspur
- \$1,000,000 for constructing pedestrian/bicycle improvements SH 83 north of Hess Road

- **C-470:** Highlands Ranch Metro District is partnering with Douglas County and CDOT on storm drainage/water quality ponds associated with the expansion.
- The Town of Parker and Douglas County entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement to jointly fund the preliminary design for the extension of **Dransfeldt Road** south of Twenty Mile Road, over Cherry Creek, connecting to Motsenbocker Road. This proposed roadway is an important component to the Parker area's long-term roadway transportation plan. This roadway project will provide a parallel route to Parker Road, which will assist in reducing traffic congestion in the area. This roadway will stimulate economic activity for the existing commercial development in the area, while also creating new development opportunities. The Town and Douglas County hope to have design and permitting completed by the end of 2021, with construction commencing in 2022/2023.
- **Douglas County** partnered with Lone Tree to pave the end of Oneida Street in Lone Tree in 2019.
- **Douglas County** has IGAs or maintenance partnerships with Castle Rock, Lone Tree, Aurora, Parker, Highlands Ranch Metro, Larkspur, City of Denver, Centennial, Littleton, United States Forest Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Douglas County School District, Teller County, Elbert County, El Paso County, Jefferson County, Arapahoe County, Tri-County Health, CDOT, and Denver Water.



## WATER INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUPPLY EFFICIENCY

- **WISE Authority:** In June, 2019, Douglas County assigned its portion of reserved WISE water to the South Metro WISE Authority for use by water providers in the south metro area, including Parker Water and Sanitation, Castle Rock Water, Meridian Metropolitan District, and Stonegate Metropolitan District. This was the culmination of a 2014 agreement entered into by Douglas County, Aurora Water, Denver Water, and the South Metro WISE Authority, to reserve 2,775 acre-feet of WISE water until such time infrastructure was built to deliver the water. WISE water deliveries started in 2018 and Dominion Water and Sanitation and Castle Rock Water are partnering on the construction of a WISE delivery water line into northwest Douglas County. Since 2014, the County invested almost \$500,000 to reserve the water. The County was reimbursed by South Metro WISE Authority as a result of the water assignment.



## WORK OF PARTNERSHIP EXISTING GROUPS

**Economic Development Forum:** A subcommittee of the PDCG, the Forum works to identify common objectives and collaborate on economic development efforts, specifically the attraction and retention of primary jobs.

- Lone Tree and Douglas County worked together on a **Business Personal Property Tax Incentive Agreement for Kiewit**. This incentive, plus the \$18 million OEDIT Job Growth Incentive Tax Credit, were the economic development tools used to attract the 2,000-job project to the RidgeGate Sky Ridge Station site. The Douglas County incentive agreement provides a 100% BPPT rebate for a twelve year period. Its estimated value is \$1,154,563.

Ongoing objectives of the group include resource and information sharing, demonstrated through the following initiatives:

- **Catylist:** Douglas County provides a countywide subscription to an online commercial property database. This useful tool supports recruitment and retention efforts, while providing economic development professionals with tenant information, lease rate trends, building occupancy information, and demographic data.
- **Quarterly Economic Activity Reports:** Douglas County staff, along with Development Research Partners, prepare quarterly reports that include information regarding employment and consumer activity, real estate data, and additional economic indicators for the Denver Metro area, which are distributed to ED Forum members.
- **Executive Networking Event:** This annual event is hosted by the PDCG and the ED Forum to encourage discussion and relationship building among Douglas County businesses, elected officials, and economic development professionals. Designed as an opportunity to network, the 2019 event hosted an estimated



## HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

- During the first three quarters of 2019, **Douglas County Housing Partnership** provided services to 584 families in Douglas County. Services included home buyer education, financial literacy coaching, reverse mortgage counseling, and foreclosure prevention counseling. Thirty-one families worked with DCHP to try to purchase a home. Forty-one households were served foreclosure notice by their lender; none lost their homes after working with DCHP. One hundred-thirteen senior families received reverse mortgage counseling.
- Douglas County Housing Partnership received approval from the Town of Castle Rock to add a 53-unit, 3-story elevated building for **low-income seniors on the current Oakwood Senior Apartments** site. The Colorado Housing and Finance Authority awarded DCHP 9% Low Income Housing Tax Credits, which are highly competitive. The LIHTCs make the development financially feasible. Construction will begin on this \$16 million development in 2020.



## YOUTH INITIATIVE

- **The Douglas County Youth Initiative:** DCYI helps children and families by bringing the entire community together. DCYI addresses pressing and complex issues and provides education and resources to assist children and families via our largest program, WrapAround. WrapAround works with approximately 250 individuals each year as they work with the entire family and with teachers, counselors, psychologists, judges, and law enforcement.
- **La Liga (soccer and basketball):** La Liga started last year in Castle Rock as a free summer soccer league for teens who could not afford to play elsewhere. This year, a winter basketball league was added, as well as a second summer soccer location (Parker). Soccer leagues served 120 students this year. This year's partners included DCYI, Nueva Vida Church, Crow Foot Coffee, Plum Creek Christian Church, Town of Parker, Douglas County School District, and the County.
- **Special Events**
  - **Youth Congress:** Over 200 students and adults (including state and local elected/appointed officials) met to discuss youth focused issues. Substance abuse was the number one topic selected by students for discussion.
  - **Outstanding Youth Awards:** Ten local DCSD teens are honored annually; in 2019 all ten students received \$1,000 donated by generous citizens.
  - **Monthly Lunch-n-Learns:** Topics included Substance Abuse, Parent Education, Mental Health Coordination, Trauma Informed Care, Youth Transportation, Mentorship, and Youth Voice. With an average audience of 60, over 500 community members attended these lunches, each featuring speakers who are subject matter experts.