



Fall 2020

## POWERFUL TIMES

### Sara's selfpower

In 2017, Sara was a single mom, living with her brother and working at a stressful job, while making less than \$1,000 a month. She had put her education on pause, but always dreamed of completing her degree and using it to help others.

She had driven past Project Self-Sufficiency and always wondered what went on inside, but had never stopped. One day, while at an appointment with her doctor, Sara learned about Project Self-Sufficiency and how the program supports single parents. She decided to give it a try.

Though she worried she wouldn't qualify because her brother was helping her to provide for her son, she applied and hoped to be accepted. In 2018, Sara became a Participant at Project Self-Sufficiency, and began to work with her Advisor, Anna, to find a career, finish her degree, and access her selfpower to achieve the life she dreamed of for her son.

Sara shares, "Project Self-Sufficiency gave my life direction. After doing a few career tests and meeting with my Advisor and other staff members, I found that I have a real passion for social work."

While facing challenges such as

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housing, financial hardships, and transportation, Sara worked tirelessly to complete her Bachelor's degree in Psychology and prepare for a career in social work. Project Self-Sufficiency helped Sara stay on track by supporting her through Healthy Family Programs and funds. Sara was able to access transportation funds to keep her car on the road and get her and her son, Xander, to school. Sara and Xander received funding from the Holiday Family Sponsorship Fund and Cool Kids Fund, which allow families to experience the holidays together and give kids the opportunity to buy new back-to-school clothes.

"Holiday gift sponsorship was a true blessing in our lives. The wonderful people who sponsored us really made our holidays magical and I am so very grateful. The Cool Kids program really helped him to have more pride in his appearance because he got to choose the clothes he wanted and didn't have to worry about wearing his cousin's old clothes."

In Sara's last semester of school, she completed an internship and was offered a part-time job at Alternatives to Violence. The position provides the opportunity for Sara to expand her experience in the field, while being flexible with her schedule.

"Project Self-Sufficiency has changed my life. Now that I work in the social work field, I am sure to have conversations with clients who I feel would benefit from the program. I want to help as many single parents as I can to learn about the program and have the same opportunities that Project Self-Sufficiency provided me."

Since graduating from Project Self-Sufficiency, Sara has started her new job, gone back to school for a graduate degree, and moved into a new apartment. She and Xander are looking forward to new challenges and opportunities.

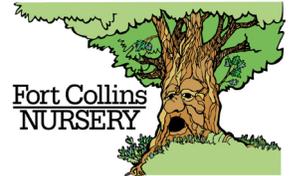
Sara's Advisor, Anna, shares, "Sara is exceptionally capable and driven. She overcame multiple barriers to accomplish her educational goals, and once completed, she set the bar even higher and is now working on her Masters of Social Work degree. She is kind, skilled, thoughtful, and someone I am proud to call a colleague."

## Project Self-Sufficiency Recognizes Our 2020 Right Size Giving Business Sponsors

Right Size Giving provides a platform for businesses to maximize their social impact and community exposure at the same time. Businesses sign up and give once each year, with recognition and benefits provided throughout the year, based on their "Power Level," or level of investment. Our Right Size Giving Sponsors are dedicated to our community and the important work we do because they know that every investment in Project Self-Sufficiency:

- Is an investment in human capital; education and training create a qualified workforce that is essential to business growth and success;
- Perpetuates a positive cycle in our community; educated and employable families become self-reliant, thrive, and are able to participate fully in all this community has to offer;
- Changes the course for multiple generations; education and career become the norm and not the exception. We see our children pursue the same level, or more, of education as their parent.

For information on becoming a Right Size Giving Sponsor, contact Ricki at 970-635-5904 or ricki@bringthepower.org.



# COVID-19 UPDATE

How Project Self-Sufficiency is handling the pandemic

*Can it really be six months into this pandemic? Really?*



Years ago, when my mom was very sick, and my sisters and I were doing everything in our power to aid in her recovery, I learned to bring grace into my life.

We were beyond stressed, and I was operating with a level of intensity that I had never before experienced. For months, I was solely focused on navigating the healthcare system and with each turn in Mom's very complex situation, I was negotiating for the very best treatment and care we could find for her. My expectations were high, and I was always direct in my communications, and not always kind.

It was sometime during this experience that the concept of grace came into my awareness. Looking back, I am sure it was Mom's influence, reminding me that we all deal with challenges differently, and that your best effort may not be my best effort, but it is still your best effort, and best efforts need to be recognized and appreciated.

Grace has an important role to play in today's reality, as our families continue to struggle with the ripple effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. On today's menu of challenges are home schooling

children, and online learning for students who never, ever wanted to take classes online. These main courses are accompanied by lost work and job-seeking during a time of high unemployment, disruptions in childcare, increased economic instability, all topped off with an extra helping of anxiety and fear, and a profound sense of isolation.

The unknown is everywhere. We are all asking, "when will this end?"

The Project Self-Sufficiency program is known for its rigor. Our model builds in very specific accountability measures, in order for a Participant to maintain good standing and consistently move forward on their degree or career path. But given today's circumstances, it seems unreasonable to expect that a single parent can realistically execute on their academic plan to take a full load of online courses at CSU and will not have some academic struggles and setbacks.

***This is a moment in time when we all need a little grace.***

Today, at Project Self-Sufficiency, grace looks like flexibility in policies and expectations because of these new hardships and realities our families are experiencing. It looks like more frequent check-ins to see how parents and children are weathering this storm and all that it brings. It includes the provision of additional funds to families who are being directly impacted by COVID-19. To maintain stability in a time of unprecedented disruption,

these funds can be used for basic needs such as food, rent, internet and utilities, or even technology.

As human service professionals, we carry more than our fair share of worry and anxiety and so for Team Awesome, grace looks like a focus on self-care and open, vulnerable conversations about how we are coping with our own distress. By allowing grace to lead the way in our judgements about ourselves and in our interactions with others, it means that we encourage and support each other and our Participants in doing our very best each day, even if it feels like it's not the best we can do. We celebrate wins and acknowledge hardships, and we remind each other that we are strong and resilient, and that we own our selfpower.

These days, I regularly "channel" my mom's selfpower and her grace. Each time, she delivers in the way that I need. For each of you carrying your own struggles and fears, we send grace, love and gratitude. We are in this together, and without you and your support, more than 100 single parents and their children would be left without our resources, pushing them farther into chaos and turmoil, and erasing their tenuous gains in housing, employment and education. Thank you for your ongoing support of our work.

In gratitude,



Tracy

## Expanding Our Eligibility Requirements

Project Self-Sufficiency is always looking for ways to expand our impact by reaching more single parents in the community. In 2019, we solicited feedback from our partners regarding our eligibility requirements.

Given today's cost of living, single-parent families who are employed full-time are still unable to make ends meet without a career that pays a living-wage. There are many working families who need our program. Our current income requirement of 185% does not capture the many families who make slightly more, but still do not have enough income to meet their needs.

However, we also know that as household income increases, community supports are no longer available. These resources are instrumental to maintaining stability as our families earn their degrees. We expect that families who earn more and are unable to access community supports will need additional supports from Project Self-Sufficiency.

As a result of these conversations, we are making two modifications to program eligibility in 2020:

1. We have increased the age of children requirement, so now a single-parent must have a child **15-year-old and younger**.
2. We are piloting an increase in income requirement with **five families** who make an income of **up to 225%** of Federal Poverty Level in 2020/2021.

We want to ensure that bringing a family into we can support that family to their finish line, we are testing this in order to determine additional needs and resources that may be required for them to be successful in our program. This will allow us to plan for and procure the additional resources needed to adequately support these families. We currently have openings in the pilot; please spread the word!

Stay tuned for additional modifications. To see a full list of our eligibility requirements, visit us at [bringthepower.org/apply](http://bringthepower.org/apply).

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## Holiday Sponsorship Fund Update: *Calling All Elves!!*

Project Self-Sufficiency Participants work hard throughout the year to further their education, which will eventually lead them to a stellar job in their chosen career path. Until they achieve their ultimate education or career goals, their budgets are tight, leaving them with limited resources to provide a holiday celebration for their children.

In light of the pandemic, this year we are offering **TWO** options to bring the power and bring holiday cheer to families: Gift Cards OR Monetary Donations.

Additionally, you can choose to be matched with a family, selecting the number of total family members, ages or gender of children, OR donate without specifying and we will match you with a family.

For more information, contact Neva at **970-407-0305**, ext. 5 or by email at [neva@bringthepower.org](mailto:neva@bringthepower.org).

### GIFT CARD SPONSORSHIPS

You purchase and then we distribute gift cards from a local store (i.e. Target, TJ Maxx, a locally owned retail shop, etc.) giving our single moms and single dads the opportunity to experience the joy of picking out gifts for their children for the holidays.

### MONETARY SPONSORSHIPS

We use these funds to purchase gift cards for families and then we distribute them, as described above. You can do this online in your pajamas! Just go to <http://bringthepower.org/donate/> and designate your gift to the "Holiday Family Sponsorship Fund."



## Board Spotlight: Farewell to Paul Thayer



We would like to thank Paul Thayer, who just finished serving six years on the Board of Directors. Paul started volunteering with Project Self-Sufficiency in 2009 as a math tutor. In 2013, Paul participated in our strategic planning process, and joined the Board the following year, serving as the Board President in 2017. Paul has been known for bringing his practical, engineering background to bear on various issues over the years.

SPOTLIGHTS

"I feel incredibly fortunate to have been a part of this amazing organization! While I know that my tutoring and my Board work have benefitted Project Self-Sufficiency, I feel like I have grown and learned so much as a result of my direct experience with the dedicated, hard-working Participants and the uniquely talented staff. Being a part of the organization has matured my outlook on poverty and has enhanced my own leadership skills. As I leave the Board, I would like to thank everyone with whom I've interacted over the years for all that they've taught me." **Thank you Paul!**

## Donor Spotlight: Denise and Rick Chapman

In an interview with Denise and Rick Chapman, the newest members of our Paragon Society, our staff discovered more about why our work is so important to them:

### Why do you support Project Self-Sufficiency?

Denise became exposed to the importance of work like ours while getting an undergraduate degree focused on family studies. She worked in an Even Start Program during this time, and her thesis focused on using community college as a hotbed for helping single parents move forward in their lives. "It was just a nice fit when we were looking at how do we invest locally and make our community better," she shared.

Rick added, "And for me, it really resonated. Project Self-Sufficiency wasn't trying to address symptoms, they are really trying to address root causes, in my mind. This is an excellent example of a hand up versus a hand out. So once Denise exposed me to the program, I thought it was an excellent model." Rick and Denise shared they

appreciate our individualized approach in working with families and our demonstrated results. They recognize that there is no quick fix to generational poverty, and understand that the systemic barriers that come into play for single parents need the intervention and resources from an organization like Project Self-Sufficiency.

### Why did you join the Paragon Society?

Denise shared, "We had the big debate about whether to do it, and the rationale was it would be doing greater, long-time good in the community because you're not only educating the parents, but it's also helping kids. Helping two generations ultimately helps the community long-term.

### Is there anything else you would like to share about your involvement in our work?

"I think Project Self-Sufficiency does the hard work that helps people change their lives. There's a lot of great not-for-profits, but the kind of commitment to the total transformation of the Participant,

and ...being there with them for sometimes 6 years to help get them where they need to be is unique and really a benefit. I think in a lot of cases, Participants haven't had that kind of relationship in their lives, someone who will stand with them through the good, the bad, and the ugly and to help them get to where they want to be," says Denise.

Rick added, "We interact with a number of groups, but you guys I think are top tier. And you're trying to solve fundamental problems and sort of instituting life long, and generational, multigenerational solutions. And you sustain, you have goals, you measure them, you hold yourselves accountable, so it's just a fantastic organization. We're so glad you're here, so we can assist in some small way."

**Thank you Denise and Rick, for joining us in bringing the power of education to single-parent families.**



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Return Service Requested

Bring the power of education to single parents.



ricki@bringthepower.org

For questions, contact Ricki at

12/8 or pre-schedule your donation starting 11/1. Visit us at [www.coloradogives.org/selfpower](http://www.coloradogives.org/selfpower) on

career goals. help single parents achieve their educational and Colorado. This year, our goal is to raise \$60,000 to celebrate and increase philanthropy across This annual day of online giving is a movement

Tuesday, December 8, 2020

CO Gives Day!



To purchase your plants online, visit <https://tinyurl.com/2020pssplantsale>. For more information or to order directly, contact Kay Williams at 970.310.3093. Orders taken now through November 2nd.

It's fall again and time for our annual Holiday Plant Sale. Purchase your red poinsettia, holiday cactus, and cyclamen for \$17 each for the holidays. Profits go to the Strengthen Scholarship Fund, supporting our single parents with educational expenses when they are enrolled in school. The plants will be available for pick-up at Fort Collins Nursery from Nov. 21 - Dec. 3, 2020. A big thanks to Fort Collins Nursery for their continued support and for always providing such beautiful plants!

FRIENDS OF PROJECT SELF-SUFFICIENCY  
FALL 2020 HOLIDAY PLANT SALE