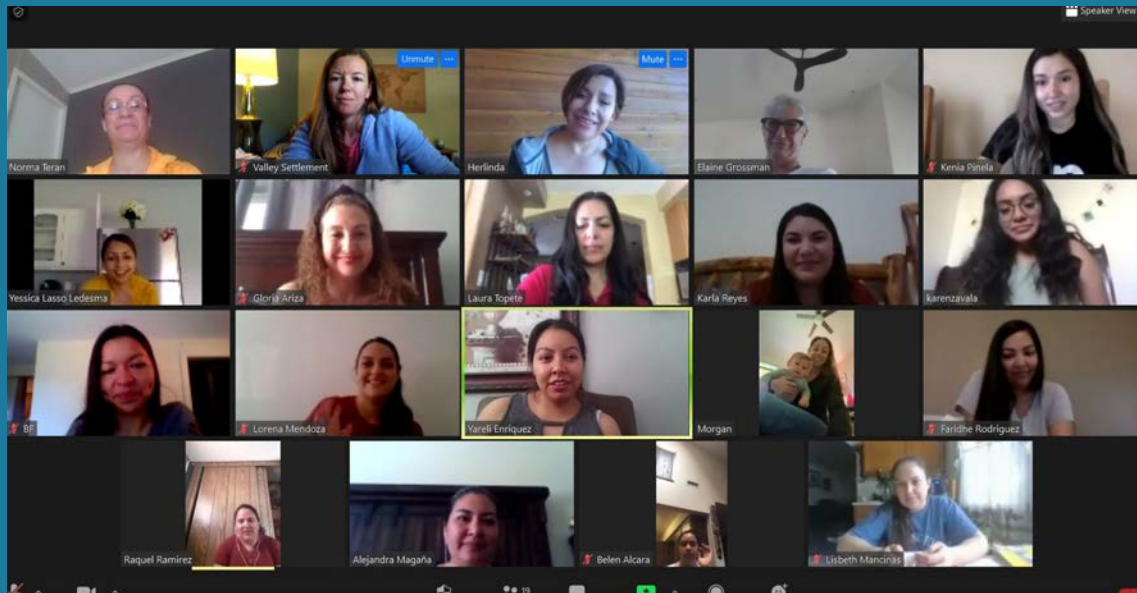


Valley Settlement Annual Report

Worlds Apart: 2019 to 2020



Friends,

It is nearly impossible to speak about the year that was without acknowledging our current reality. So, we won't.

The inequities exposed in our community over the past seven months were always there, and the urgency of the pandemic made them impossible to ignore. There are so many who are engaged in efforts to address these small and large injustices, and many more who have just awakened to and joined in this work. Let us move forward together, learning from each other and fighting for a tomorrow where equal opportunity is a reality and not a dream.

It is easy to fall back into comfort and inaction when urgent moments pass. We hope that this awakening is different; that what has been seen in these last seven months will not become unseen again.

In this report you will glimpse into the lives of our families as they were and as they are now. We will acknowledge the generous donors who strengthened our programs in 2019, ensuring we could quickly evolve to meet families' drastically changing needs. And we'll look at the partnerships and stories that are helping our families survive this pandemic. Thank you for joining us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paula Nickell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and a stylized "N".

Paula Nickell
Board President, Valley Settlement

Resilience in the Face of Coronavirus

When the COVID-19 crisis hit, Valley Settlement had to quickly adjust to the new realities. The impact was severe, with all programs needing to be converted quickly for remote delivery to participants in their homes. Our families faced sudden loss of employment that put their housing and food security at risk as the resort economy shut down. Our staff had to quickly adjust to providing services virtually, while balancing their own family needs and their children's remote schooling.

In the following pages, you will see how staff made this happen. They found new curricula suitable for virtual programming and worked with families to ensure they had access to the internet and a wifi-connected device to use. Incredibly, 99% of participants remained with their program(s).

At the same time, program staff became de facto members of the Family Support Team, meeting with families virtually to assess their needs and connect them with information and resources. Our partner agencies, donors, and the community stepped up to raise and distribute significant financial assistance to struggling families.

The real story of the COVID-19 pandemic so far at Valley Settlement, however, is the resiliency of our families. The following quotes illustrate what parents learned about their children and themselves in the first few months of the shutdown:

I learned that despite the difficulties that have arisen, if we are united as a family, we can overcome them.

In these last few months, my son taught me to be a better father to him.

I learned that the family bond is paramount. The presence of the parents in the home is fundamental for the best development of the children. And as parents we learned that being present with them makes their love of themselves grow even more.

Learning with Love

In 2019, 48 parents and their toddlers participated in classes and home visits



In the Spring of 2019, **22** children graduated and moved on to preschool.

2019 Outcomes show:

- ♥ Parents demonstrated significant improvement in parent/child interactions
- ♥ Parents were more confident to access community resources and more engaged in their child's education

Teachers convened two group classes per week, and conducted two home visits each month, focused on children's individual development. Nearly 1/3 of children were found eligible to receive early intervention services.

In 2020, teachers shifted to virtual home visits and doorstep graduations

Activities and materials were delivered to students' homes and teachers used the **Kinedu app** to facilitate parent/child interactions.

97% of families stayed with the program during remote learning.

56 needs assessments were conducted and families were supported with food, financial, and other resources.

Parents met over Zoom and shared videos.



El Busesito Preschool

In 2019, three buses served 96 children with in-person classes and home visits



In the Spring of 2019, **49** children graduated from El Busesito Preschool.

2019 Outcomes show:

- 🌀 Children improved in their cognitive, language, and social-emotional development
- 🌀 Parents were more engaged in their child's education, and improved their parent/teacher relationships

Teachers measured student progress using TS GOLD, an observational tool. Parents were engaged as volunteers, at home and in the classroom. Home visits supported individual development and children arrived at kindergarten ready to learn.

In 2020, teachers moved quickly to deliver activities and remote learning

180 bags filled with books and materials were delivered to students' homes. **100%** of families stayed with the program during remote learning.

Each student received **48 videos** from teachers to support student learning. Parents embraced their role as their child's primary teacher.

43 students who will move onto kindergarten participated in a "drive-through" graduation.



Family, Friends & Neighbors

In 2019, 32 providers caring for 120 children met with coaches to improve care

Providers gained knowledge and skills to keep children healthy and safe through twice-monthly home visits and quarterly group trainings with Valley Settlement educators. Topics include safe sleep, building a routine, child nutrition, the importance of reading and sharing stories, and healthy brain development.



By the end of the program year, **92%** of providers showed improvement in their child care environment, as measured on the FCCERS scale.

Providers reported being more **engaged in their community** and using more **community resources** due to the program.

Intentional relationship-building throughout the year resulted in **64%** of providers reporting a decrease in feelings of isolation and loneliness.

In 2020, those relationships continued...virtually

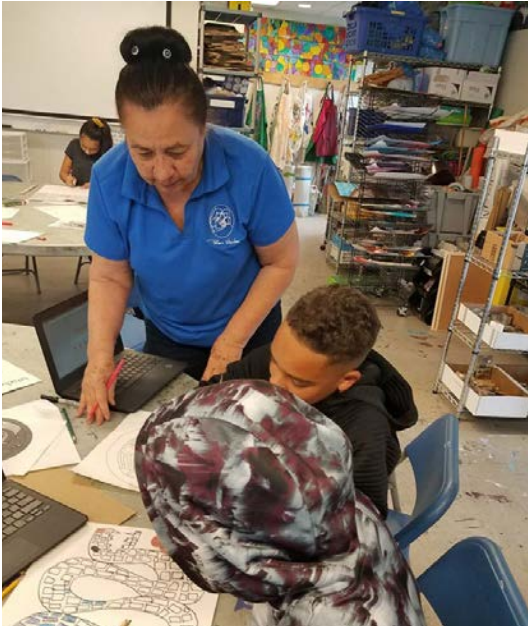
Many providers lost all the children in their care overnight, with parents suddenly out of work and back at home. Staff quickly found that the technology so many of us rely on during the pandemic didn't work for many FFN providers. Instead, educators picked up the phone.

One-on-one virtual visits continued. Staff offered moral and emotional support for those who were struggling, and connected them with resources to help with food, rent, and other needs.



Parent Mentor

Parent Mentors faced a year of triumph and loss



In the Spring of 2019, **37** Mentors completed the program year, celebrating a combined **12,905** volunteer hours in elementary school classrooms.

2019 Outcomes show:

- Students in classrooms with a Parent Mentor improved their **attitude towards learning** and demonstrated more resiliencies in response to challenging academic tasks
- Parent Mentors are more **engaged in the community** and they increased their sense of **parenting competence**

A change at the state level in fingerprint processing derailed the program during the summer months of 2019, with many parent volunteers feeling uncomfortable with the new process. Parent Mentors organized and advocated for a more parent-friendly and inclusive volunteer policy at the district level. Their hard work paid off; with an outpouring of support from the school community and parents, the new policy was adopted in November 2019.

Just as Parent Mentors were getting back in the swing of being in classrooms, COVID shut down the schools. Valley Settlement staff stayed in touch with Parent Mentors as they were adapting to constantly changing circumstances and supporting their own children as they adjusted to online learning. The team convened weekly Zoom calls to stay connected through the end of the program year. The program is currently on hiatus through the end of 2020, and we hope to safely resume the program in 2021.



Lifelong Learning

In 2019, over 100 adult students committed to advancing their education

Teachers met with students weekly for classes averaging three hours in length. Classes were held in safe community spaces like libraries and churches. The program offered eight courses during the school year, including Beginner English, Intermediate English, Computer Skills, and Language Arts and Math.

Summer classes included:

Expanding Quality in Infant and Toddler Care, a collaboration with Garfield County
Expression through Art, a collaboration with VOICES

English practice, where students paired off and role played conversations

By the end of the program year, Lifelong Learners reported they were more engaged in their community and more confident to access community resources. They also reported significant increases in **self-esteem** and a **sense of flourishing**.



In 2020, students completed classes in a new virtual world

In the first two weeks of the shutdown, Lifelong Learning staff scoured the internet and reached out to local libraries to find resources to support adults with online learning. They found programs like MyELT and ReadWorks, and spent time one-on-one with students who weren't comfortable using Zoom or accessing online programs. "At first, I thought we would have lots of drop-outs," says program manager Alejandra Magaña. But by the end of the program year, everyone was still there. The program year ended having served 101 students, with an average attendance rate of 80% - including remote attendance.

This fall, classes resumed online and in small groups, socially distanced and masked. The program will continue this way throughout the program year.

Alma

2019 marked the completion of the study with CU Boulder

Valley Settlement completed our commitment to recruiting and consenting pregnant women and new moms into the study through CU Boulder in November 2019. **70% of moms who began meeting with a compañera (peer coach) completed all of their planned sessions.**



Initial results from the study are promising. Participating moms showed **decreases in depression, anxiety, and perceived stress** at the mid-point and end of the program. Those decreases were largely sustained at six-months-post-program, with only slight increases over the endpoint score. These outcomes show the program is effective at giving moms tools to cope with depression, anxiety, and stressors, and moms retain and use the tools over time.

In the beginning of 2020, new grant funding allowed Valley Settlement Alma compañeras to begin seeing moms outside the study. As the pandemic draws out and we begin to see mental and behavioral health impacts surfacing, Alma will be an important tool in helping moms of young children cope with symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress.

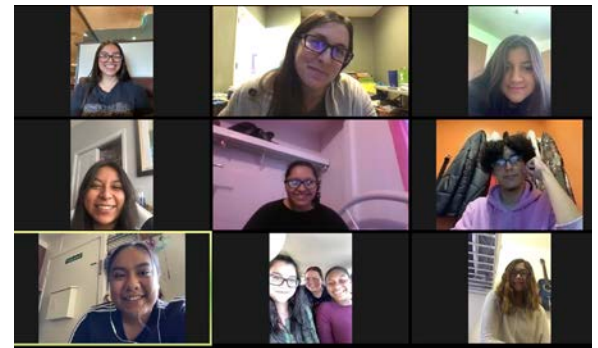
Based on the success of the study, CU Boulder and Renée Crown Wellness Institute hope to launch the program in other locations across Colorado. With this model, CU/Renée Crown would oversee program standards and quality, and community-based programs would implement and lead the work. Experienced compañeras, like those at Valley Settlement, may train and mentor others in a train-the-trainer model. Alma is an effective and cost-efficient way to provide culturally-relevant support for new mothers in rural areas where mental health resources are limited.

Partnering for Change

Collaborating and innovating to increase the early childhood workforce

Valley Settlement and Early Childhood Network have been partnering for the past year on a project to bring the Child Development Associate (CDA) certification to bilingual high school students and informal caregivers in the Roaring Fork and Eagle River Valleys. Collaborators on the project include Aspen Community Foundation, Eagle County, Eagle Schools, Yampah Mountain High School and the Roaring Fork School District. The work is funded through an Early Milestones Early Childhood Workforce Innovation grant.

The CDA certificate is earned through a combination of early childhood coursework and practicum hours in child care centers. Prior to the pandemic, students were learning in class, then applying their knowledge in actual child care settings, working as volunteers or interns. While the pandemic has temporarily shut down the practicum component, students are learning in virtual classrooms and looking toward a future in early childhood education.



Summer Success with Summit54

Valley Settlement and Summit54 worked together to provide a six-week, small group, outdoor tutoring program called Summer Success that provided academic assistance, social/emotional support, mindfulness practice using FocusedKids programming, physical exercise, healthy snacks, and take-home lunches to 230 students in Basalt, Carbondale, and Glenwood Springs. Valley Settlement manned phone banks to let families know about the program and help them register their children. Young students had the opportunity to socialize with their peers while having fun learning, and parents enjoyed free childcare after months of “stay at home” guidelines. The Summer Success program was so effective, parents requested the outdoor tutoring concept be extended through the fall. Safety measures were carefully followed throughout.

Partnering for Change

Emergency financial relief for families impacted by the pandemic

Valley Settlement worked with FocusedKids™ and MANAUS to get emergency funding out the door quickly in the first few months of the pandemic. Valley Settlement raised and disbursed over \$570,000 in economic aid for families unable to access federal or county assistance. MANAUS's LaMedichi Savings Clubs' financial platform proved effective at distributing funds to those who needed it most, and the Left Behind Workers Fund brought in external resources to support area families who were ineligible for other aid. Combined, these efforts have distributed over \$2 million to individuals and families from Aspen to Parachute.

Many across the valley recognized the need for financial assistance in those first few weeks of the pandemic. The 2020 Rescue Fund through Aspen Community Foundation has provided sustained COVID relief through the Spring, Summer and Fall as nonprofits across the community respond to the diverse impacts of the pandemic. All these coordinated efforts have strengthened our community.

Bringing families together at Rock Bottom Ranch

The team at Aspen Center for Environmental Studies partnered with Valley Settlement to safely bring new and returning participants in our Little Bus Preschool and Learning with Love programs out for a day of environmental education, exploration, and fun at Rock Bottom Ranch. Families gathered in small groups and participated in activities facilitated by the Ranch's environmental educators.

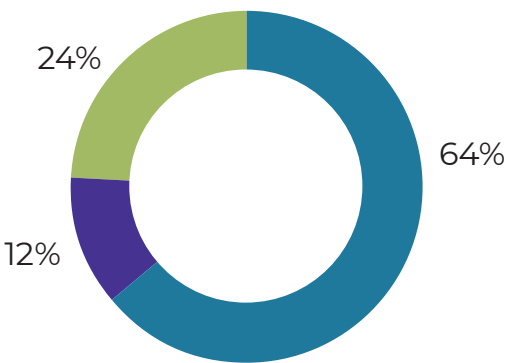
For many, it was the first time discovering the natural riches in their own backyard. New families had a chance to meet their teachers for the coming year in person. The event was a welcome respite from the wildfire and quarantine fatigue that had set in by late August.



Financials - 2019

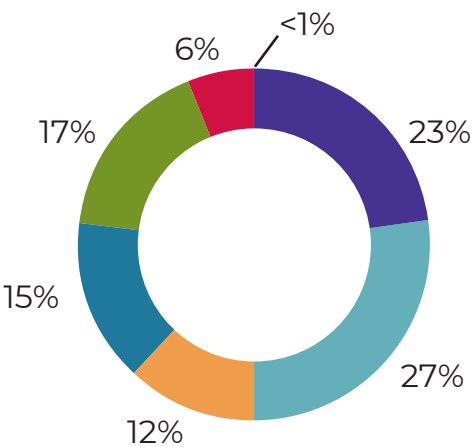
Revenue¹

● Businesses & Foundations	\$1,778,331
● Government	\$327,111
● Individuals	\$653,985
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Total	\$2,759,427



Expenses²

● Learning with Love	\$623,444
● Little Bus Preschool	\$724,039
● Family, Friends & Neighbors	\$316,963
● Lifelong Learning	\$393,870
● Parent Mentor	\$447,690
● Alma	\$175,248
● 2019 Emergency Relief	\$5,483
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Total	\$2,686,737



¹Revenue represents all gifts and grants allocated for 2019, and does not include pledges or grant awards booked in 2019 but designated for future years.

²Expenses represent the fully burdened cost of each program, which includes fundraising and general and administrative costs.

Gratitude for our 2019 donors



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*denotes a donor-advised fund of the Aspen
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2019 donors continued

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