



PathFinder

The newsletter for volunteers, supporters, and friends of Florence Crittenton Services

November 2022 Florence Crittenton Services Educating, preparing, and empowering teen mothers and their children

Living a Legacy of Excellence in Action

Building on Lessons Learned Throughout the Pandemic

Though no one was exempt from the overwhelming disruptions and challenges of the last 32 months, Florence Crittenton (FloCrit) teen families felt the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic more acutely than many. Although the 2022-2023 school year largely feels like a return to our pre-pandemic campus life, it is important for us to take what we have learned over nearly three years of pandemic service delivery as we re-build a lively and community-centered campus. Some of those lessons include:

-A greater depth and breadth of service for FloCrit families. Throughout the pandemic, fewer FloCrit moms and children were regularly able to attend school, but we saw the need for more intensive case management and expanded services for all moms, particularly our transitioning seniors and alums. In this issue of the Pathfinder, you'll read more about FloCrit alums and how staying connected with FloCrit after graduation is helping them build the future they want for themselves and their families.

-Increasing mental health and housing services to stabilize teen families and help them create strong foundations for their futures. In addition to hiring a new Bilingual Clinical Services Manager (page 5), Florence Crittenton Services has begun investing more in housing services. Since the beginning of the school year, our Housing Team has helped 49 families with housing support and spent over \$19,000 in rental assistance for 23 families.

-Building an economic line of sight to well-paying jobs. The pandemic highlighted the economic precarity of millions of Americans, and as part of the future workforce of America, FloCrit moms and alums need to be equipped with the skills to build careers that can provide for an ever-increasing cost of living. This year, we are exploring more workforce development initiatives and paid internships with the help of our campus and community partners.

No aspect of life remained untouched throughout the last few years, however one constant is the strength and determination of FloCrit teen moms. Jaide from the class of 2025 sums it up, "I want people to know that even though challenges come along, there are still people and resources to help you. FloCrit did that for me."

A MESSAGE FROM OUR NEW PRESIDENT & CEO, DESTA TAYE-CHANNELL

In the hallway of our high school is a picture of a phoenix. Under the picture is a quote that says, "It is here she dares to rise." The hope, the re-birth, and the reimagining of different possibilities is what Florence Crittenton Services is all about.

Year after year we serve a group of young moms who are ready for opportunities that will change their future. At this year's Miles for Moms, Katie, a new mom and current student shared that she "found a sense of purpose, a sense of optimism, a huge sense of confidence here. I have all the resources here to be successful now and in the future."

We can never say it as well as our young moms can say it. This organization serves two generations of young people with passion and purpose to reach their potential. We invite you to continue supporting us, come visit us, and be part of watching them RISE!!



DESTA TAYE-CHANNELL, MA, LPC,
PRESIDENT AND CEO

Desta has a Masters in Counseling from the Denver Theological Seminary and served for 10 years as the Director of the Student and Family Support Program team here at FloCrit. She has over 25 years of experience in the human service field, as well as over 13 years of experience providing clinical services to at-risk children, youth, and families. Desta has had multiple leadership roles at non-profits such as the Mile High United Way. Desta joined Florence Crittenton Services of Colorado in April 2012.

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FloCrit Alums Live Untraditional Paths to Success

When you think of success, what comes to mind? Is it a big house, a high-paying job, or power and influence? Although there's no uniform definition of success, the traditional American view of "the dream" typically includes wealth and important connections. Many of us have subscribed to this mindset in one way or another, but recent interviews with two FloCrit alumni have provided refreshing insights on living a meaningful and successful life with their families. We know we can learn so much from our alumni, and part of FloCrit's Impact 2025 Strategic Plan involves engaging with alumni to understand their journeys better and how that translates into programmatic support for current moms. Angie and Stephany, two alumni who have created their own paths to success, share how FloCrit empowered them to build the future they want.



Angie wasn't yet 15 years old when she became pregnant. After receiving information about Florence Crittenton Services from her doctor, she decided to attend Florence Crittenton High School. On her first day of school, Angie walked into the lunch room feeling alone and unsure. After looking around and seeing how many other teen moms surrounded her, she explains that she felt much more confident and less alone. For Angie, she couldn't even imagine what her future might look like. Before becoming pregnant, she experienced the loss of her grandmother (her primary caregiver) and fell into a state of depression. "I was honestly just trying to get to the next day. Like, I wasn't even thinking of the future. Nothing. I was just trying to keep going. And that's when I got pregnant."



Mia Malani, Angie's daughter, was named because of its meaning: *heavenly flower*. "I really believe my grandma dropped her down from heaven and gave her to me. And it really gave me a different perspective. And it changed my life." For Angie, this was just the beginning of a difficult journey. Having caring adults in her life was a new experience, so it took a while for her to trust those around her. She remembers pushing FloCrit staff away because she didn't trust that they were trying to help her. Eventually, Angie warmed up and began to view Florence Crittenton as a second home.

After graduating, Angie participated in Denver's Summer Youth Employment Program and worked with art therapist and interim Student and Family Support Program (SFSP) Director, Donica Snyder. Being mentored by Donica helped her grow and heal in numerous ways, and she began thinking about what her future might hold now that she had a high school degree. Following her internship, she began working in the Early Childhood Education Center (ECE), the same place she took Mia when she began attending FloCrit. However, her path still wasn't linear, and Angie was learning to be okay with that. She took a break from working in the ECE to start esthetics school, and soon received her certificate to become an esthetician. Meanwhile, Angie became a mother a second time. When her son Zeus was born, Angie recalls realizing an interest in psychology and working with preschool kids that have behavioral issues and challenges.



This year, Angie returned to FloCrit as a pre-school teacher and is the lead teacher in her room. She plans on using this position as a springboard into a career in pediatric psychology as she explores applying to college. Zeus is six months old and happily crawling around with his friends in the ECE, and Mia Malani is having a blast (while giving lots of sass) in 2nd grade.



*Photos supplied by Angie Pinedo



Stephany, an alum who graduated with the class of 2017, reflects on how FloCrit has helped shape her journey and helped her define success for herself and her family. Before FloCrit, Stephany wasn't thinking about her own definition of success. At 18 years old, Stephany had a one-year old daughter and had stopped going to school, "I didn't really care what I did... it wasn't a pretty lifestyle." She heard about FloCrit from a friend, and her mom was her biggest champion in returning to school; this is where her life really began to change. "Once I went back [to school], it changed me a lot. I saw all these moms as examples, and I didn't want to be out partying anymore. I wanted to be in school with my kid."

Stephany found community at FloCrit and loved the non-judgemental atmosphere with her peers and teachers. With peers, teachers, and FloCrit staff encouraging her, Stephany graduated with the class of 2017. "Even after you graduate, [the FloCrit staff] still have your back no matter what. They still genuinely care." A few years after earning her degree, Stephany remembers calling on Director of Early Childhood Education Center, Mona Lisa Martinez, to help her advocate for her own child just like FloCrit advocated for her.

Stephany explains that FloCrit has "built up my confidence" and provided resources as well as support when her daughter, Alanis, was having trouble in school. She acknowledges that many young moms can feel judged for their youth in their child's school setting. However, being able to call on FloCrit helps them feel prepared and empowered.

Currently, Stephany is a Manager at a restaurant in the Denver metro area while she pursues her degree to be a Veterinary Assistant. As she looks back on her own life, she knows that she has been successful. "Success is achieving your own personal goals at your own time. Everybody has a standard in life to graduate at 18, get married, have kids after, but that's not the case for everyone. You go at your own pace. And whenever you succeed, that's when it was meant to happen for you."



*Photos supplied by Stephany M.

Volunteer Update



Firehouse Quilts drop off a donation of quilts and blankets

Volunteers are an important and valuable part of the FloCrit campus community, and we are so excited about returning to a sense of normalcy on campus as most Covid-19 restrictions are lifted. Just as our teen families are back on campus in large numbers and with regularity, volunteering in-person has been reintroduced and it is making an amazing impact!

We cannot express our gratitude to our volunteers enough; our regular volunteers keep our free basic needs store, Baby Bucks, running by opening it for students to shop and by keeping the shelves stocked with diapers, wipes, formula, school supplies, clothes, and so much more. Weekly volunteers in the ECE support teachers and build relationships with students in their regular classroom.

Group volunteers complete big projects and help us keep campus welcoming and inviting for our students. So far this school year, KPMG, Xcel Energy, and PwC have pulled weeds, trimmed hedges, cleaned the playgrounds, planted flowers, and refinished benches. Pinacol Assurance and Comcast helped with family engagement events by serving food and running fun activities. Mortenson helped kick off the school year by filling backpacks with school supplies, which were distributed on the first day of school. SM Energy, the Junior League of Denver, and Women United of Mile High United Way organized Baby Bucks to give FloCrit moms a much better shopping experience.



Xcel Energy Day of Service earlier this year.

Volunteers are an integral part of the FloCrit community! If you are interested in learning more about volunteer opportunities, please email our Volunteer and Special Events Coordinator, Yara Vaneau, at yvaneau@flocritco.org.

Long-Time Supporters Utilize Talent and Experience in Giving

Donna Sorensen and Vince Dean are longtime members of the Florence Crittenton community, first connecting in the spring of 1991 when Donna began a 13-year period as the Business Teacher who went on to create a comprehensive career program for FloCrit moms. “Students learned valuable skills and explored various careers during weekly field trips. I connected with over 600 career women in the Denver area to provide mentoring, guest speakers, and job opportunities for the students.”

Since retiring from teaching, Donna and her husband Vince have found many ways to stay involved with FloCrit and give back. Vince annually donates his time to take photos at FloCrit events, as commemorating the big and small moments for FloCrit families is important to both. “I know from my experience as a teacher how important Florence Crittenton is to the young women who attend. [FloCrit] continues to add resources that are needed to help these students to be successful in life.”

Some of those resources include the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Center, which Donna and Vince have supported through financial gifts since 1994. They regularly designate their giving to the ECE and take advantage of the Child Care Contribution Tax Credit which allows donors in Colorado to take a 50% income tax credit on qualifying contributions, lowering the cost of the donation and often allowing donors to make even bigger gifts. “This tax credit allows us to increase our giving and receive the benefit savings on our state taxes each year. We continue to make annual donations because it helps the [ECE] as well as helping us.”

Donna and Vince are also founding members of the 125 Legacy Circle, recognizing those who make planned gifts and contributions to Florence Crittenton Services’ Dorothea Hogue Endowment Fund. Donna had worked with Dorothea and leapt at the opportunity to honor her, as well as provide for the future sustainability of FloCrit. “We believe in the mission and believe that as long as there are teen moms there will always be a need for FloCrit.”

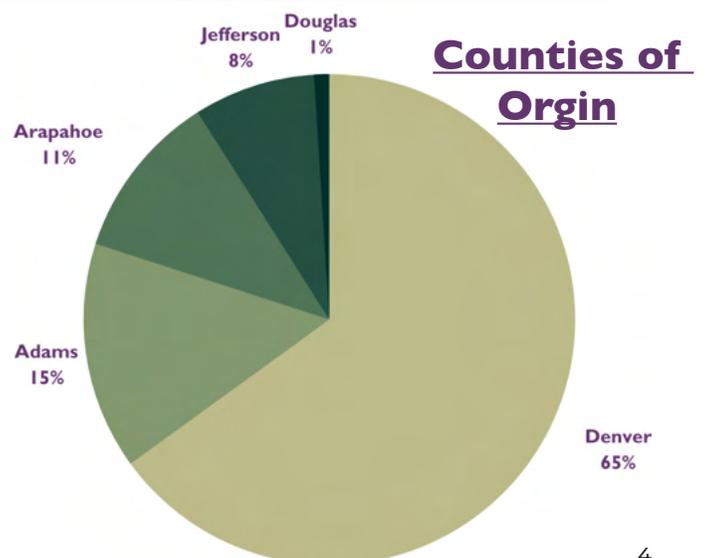
As longtime supporters, Donna and Vince have seen a lot of growth and evolution at FloCrit. “It is very exciting to see the addition of the new facility across the cul-de-sac from where my teaching experience ended. The building definitely allows Florence Crittenton to offer more comprehensive support to the students. The on-site clinic means that students no longer have to miss a day of school to take themselves or their children to doctor visits. I’m especially excited to see the addition of the [MedConnect] program right there. Students have the opportunity to gain important skills and graduate steps closer to pursuing a career in health care.” Their giving history reflects their shared priorities of supporting the development of two-generations of FloCrit families and providing a foundation for Florence Crittenton as we continue to evolve as an organization.



Donna and Dorothea Hogue at 2022 Pathways to Empowerment

Contact Director of Development Theresa Garcia at tgarcia@flocritco.org or 720-423-8910 to discuss how to maximize your gift to Florence Crittenton Services.

Statistics Corner Florence Crittenton Services 2022-23



Breaking Down Barriers in Mental Health

Florence Crittenton Services exists to remove barriers for teen moms so that they are empowered to build the lives they envision for their families. Therefore, when a barrier to receiving quality mental health became apparent for many students, it was clear that FloCrit needed to make a change. Nearly 75% of Florence Crittenton High School students identify as Latina or Latinx, and for many of them, Spanish is their first language. If you can imagine trying to receive support or to express yourself in another language, then you may understand how limiting this was for many students. Enter Laura Rivera and the Caring for Denver Foundation. In 2018, Denver voters passed Ordinance 301 to establish a \$45 million fund to address mental health issues within the city. This year, FloCrit received a 3-year grant from Caring for Denver, fully funding Laura's position and further emphasizing mental health on campus

N: Tell me about yourself! Who are you and how did you get here?

Laura: I had been a caseworker for six years, and I was ready to do more leadership, like really share my knowledge with other people and help them do case management... I always knew I wanted to help people. And just growing up in a Mexican household I saw a lot of stigma around mental health...any type of mental health was always blamed on something that I don't think was the core reason. And so I'm trying to break that stigma and help my people.



Laura enjoys summer activities with FloCrit moms

N: Why did you want to work at Florence Crittenton Services?

Laura: This place is just really, really special. It's somewhere [teen moms] can get their social/emotional learning needs met...These students have a lot going on, and I like seeing how they persevere and how resilient they are. And I really look up to them and love to see how much they do.

N: Can you tell me a little bit about why this position was added to FloCrit?

Laura: Looking at our data, about 75% of students consider themselves Hispanic/Latinx. What they saw is there were a lot of language barriers. So for some students that wanted additional help, we had

Laura Rivera



Ms. Rivera is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) who holds her master's degree in Community Counseling from Regis University and Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Metropolitan State University. Ms. Rivera is trained in Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT), Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), and Anger Management. Ms. Rivera is also an Approved Treatment Provider (ATP) through the Department of Corrections and a Certified Addiction Specialist (CAS). When she is not working, she practices her own self-care by hanging out with her family and friends, enjoying the outdoors and hanging out with her two dogs. She grew up in Nebraska and has been in Colorado for 12 years.

therapists that only spoke English, and [we needed] someone with that cultural role and cultural awareness, somebody that speaks their language. We brought down that barrier to access those students in particular.

N: And when you sit down with these students, what kind of approach do you take?

Laura: I feel like sometimes, you know, life gets overwhelming, and we forget the positives. And it's easier to focus on the negatives. So just really meeting them where they're at and talking about what they want to talk about. Doing client-centered therapy and being strength based.

N: That's amazing...To finish up our time, how can the FloCrit community help you and the SFSP Advocates? What's something you want people to know about this department?

Laura: Yeah, I think we just need to get our name out there more. [I've been] outreaching to my people: the people I've worked with, friends, family and I'll be like "Hey, look at this awesome work we're doing, come and support us come volunteer!"...Let's volunteer and show the students and these children that we know they're important... FloCrit moms can be somebody and they're going to do something with their lives."

An ECE Alum Gives Back



Nico proudly stands in front of FloCrit mural

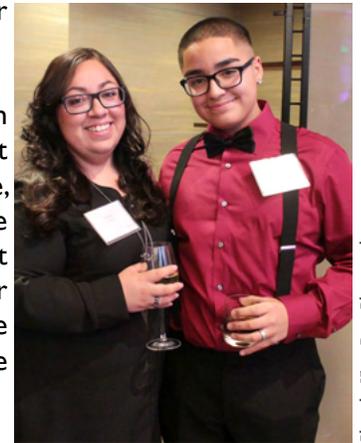
Every year, the Florence Crittenton Campus graduates two generations of alums: from Florence Crittenton High School and the Florence Crittenton Early Childhood Education Center. In 2007, three-year old Nico Gomez and his mother Tanisha, graduated from FloCrit, but never really disconnected from campus. Nico is currently a senior at Denver West High School and is planning a fundraiser with his Student Voice & Leadership class to benefit FloCrit in March 2023 with a goal to raise \$5,000 for FloCrit teen families.

Nico and Tanisha reconnected with FloCrit in early 2019, when their story was featured at our Pathways to Empowerment: Building Bright Futures Together gala. Nico was in 8th grade, and the experience of sharing their story, and reflecting on the accomplishments of his mom inspired him to use what she has given him to give

back to future FloCrit High School and ECE graduates. "My mom is my entire world. She has sacrificed so much for the both of us. She is a warrior, a champion of the people and the most important woman in my life. I'm proud that she never gave up on me. She never stopped loving me or supporting me on my decisions, she has always been my rock. I'm proud that she didn't give up. Having me at 14 but also finishing high school is a major accomplishment and I can't thank her enough."

He started by throwing a small fundraiser in 2019. "I was only able to fundraise \$100. Yes, that's a donation but I didn't think it was enough. So, I gathered my leaders and began to plan a new fundraiser, a better one." But their planning was interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the event that Nico and his classmates will throw will be the culmination of three years of planning through a pandemic and overcoming the challenges of a non-traditional high school experience. "Having to do school during the pandemic was scary. I didn't know what to do. Toward the end of lockdown, I lost all my motivation for work and for my education, I needed to fix my mental health. But being a part of West that following year helped me heal and become stronger for my community."

Now, it is Nico's West community who is coming together to support him and his dreams, and through him, the dreams of all FloCrit teen families. "My event is called Legacy of the Phoenix... I know I can't support every teen mother and child but if a FloCrit ECE Alum can make even a little bit of change, that's all that matters... I've never seen an ECE Alum do something like this and I'm hoping to be the first. I want district leaders... to see that teen pregnancy isn't a bad thing, teen parents are humans just like anyone of us, we learn, and we grow." Nico will graduate December 2022 from West, and after throwing his event, he hopes to train at Rocky Mountain Pro Wrestling next fall with a goal to become a WWE Professional Wrestler. He has been accepted to Community College of Denver, Front Range Community College, and is waiting to hear from Metro State University.



Nico and Tanisha at 2019 Pathways to Empowerment

To learn more about Nico's upcoming event, reach out to Theresa Garcia at tgarcia@flocritco.org or 720-423-8910.

Celebrate our 130th year of supporting Denver area women and children with Pathways to Empowerment, Thursday April 13th at the Denver Botanic Gardens. Hear stories of the unbridled strength and limitless potential of FloCrit teen families from current and former teen moms. Tickets will be available in January, and sponsorships are available now by contacting Theresa Garcia at tgarcia@flocritco.org or 720-423-8910.

Save the Date!

PATHWAYS
To Empowerment

April 13th, 2023
DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS

Miles for Moms 2022

At the 17th Annual Miles for Moms, we saw our community come together in magnificent ways and truly embody what it means to “live a legacy of excellence in action.” It was a beautiful sunny morning filled with celebration, connection, empowerment, and movement. The FloCrit community raised over \$63,000 to continue to educate, prepare, and empower teen moms and their children.

The event kicked off with remarks from Theresa Garcia, Director of Development, Colorado State Representative Alex Valdez of District 5, and Desta Taye-Channell, FloCrit’s new President and CEO. Desta delivered an empowering speech, and was followed by two alumni who generously shared their stories. Alumna Hawa, Class of 2019, remarked on the consistent support she received from FloCrit staff and how the encouragement to continue her education has changed the course of her life. Next, current student Katie, Class of 2023, delivered an inspiring speech. Explaining that although her journey to Florence Crittenton wasn’t easy, she is glad that she decided to complete her GED because

she “realized that the sacrifice I made to come to school would ultimately change our lives for the better.”

A short kid’s race and a warm-up led by FIT4MOM was a wonderful way to begin the running portion of the event. Additionally, we were joined by organizations like Denver Public Library, Mi Familia Vota, and FloCrit student Alison’s accessory business. The Women’s Bean Project provided gift baskets for the winners of our running, stroller, and costume competitions.

Thank you to everyone who spent their Saturday morning with us on October 8th. Additionally, we are extremely grateful for those who could not attend but supported us from afar by either sharing about the event or directly donating. FloCrit moms are building the lives they choose for them and their families with the help of supporters like you!



Photo by Vince Dean Photography

Hawa gives her speech at Miles for Moms

“YOU ALL BELIEVE IN ME AND I THANK GOD EVERYDAY FOR BRINGING KIND SOULS INTO MY LIFE. YOU ALL AND FLORENCE CRITTENTON SERVICES HAVE DONE SO MUCH FOR ME AND MOTIVATED ME TO BE THE BEST VISION OF MYSELF.” -HAWA, CLASS OF 2019



Running, walking, and rolling!



Enjoying the sunshine at Huston Lake Park



Photo by Justin Viens

Desta and sister-in-law Beth

242
Participants

Thank You to Our Sponsors



Over
\$63k
Raised

Route



Photo by Vince Dean Photography

FIT4MOM takes a selfie after leading warm-up



Photo by Vince Dean Photography

Katie speaks at Miles for Moms



Colorado Gives Day Season

NOVEMBER 1ST-DECEMBER 6TH, 2022

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