

# Caritas

## Quarterly

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*/'karita:s/ (noun) love of humankind, charity*

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Every year, as part of my job, I am privileged to participate in the Warm the Soles charity event. This wonderful program occurs every Christmas season and provides needed shoes for underprivileged children up and down the Wasatch Front.

Warm the Soles was started by University Credit Union over 30 years ago, and has since been supported by many other credit unions throughout Utah.



**Derk Knowlton**  
University Federal Credit Union  
Chief Marketing Officer

It is heart-warming to watch as these kids receive their gifts from Santa, tear open the wrapping paper, and try on the brand-new pair of shoes. From cool sneakers to warm boots, the footwear is as varied as the kids receiving them.

However, the joy and excitement is the same, no matter the size of the child.

This past year, we were faced with a unique challenge while selecting the shoes for Warm the Soles. One of the boys in the program, a 15-year-old named Nick, is 6'8" tall and wears a size-19 shoe! After searching several shoe stores, we quickly found out that no one sells a shoe that large. How could we find something for Nick?

After reaching out via Twitter and asking for ideas of where to get such large shoes, an interesting idea was formed: Ask Rudy Gobert, the 7'1" center for the Utah Jazz.

Alexa Adams, a member of our marketing team and a die-hard Utah Jazz fan, was in charge of organizing our Warm the Soles efforts. She decided to reach out to Rudy Gobert via Instagram and ask him where he gets his shoes. It seemed like a long shot, reaching out to a famous NBA player in the middle of the season. Shortly after Alexa

sent the message, Rudy replied back! However, instead of telling us where to buy shoes, he asked if he could donate some of his own size 20-sneakers. Of course, we said, "Yes!"

We coordinated with several staff members of the Utah Jazz and before long we had a gift that Nick will never forget. He received a Utah Jazz jersey, a basketball and, of course, two pairs of Rudy's enormous sneakers.

This experience was special to those of us involved, for multiple reasons. The fact that Rudy Gobert took time out of his busy schedule to assist our cause is very telling of the kind of person he is. He was happy to help out in a way that may have felt insignificant to him, but was highly impactful to others. He didn't talk about what he did on social media or seek any publicity for his actions. He simply wanted to help.

Although Rudy's contribution to Warm the Soles was exciting and memorable to us, it's important to recognize that programs such as these are possible because thousands of other people have the same desire as Rudy — they simply want to help.

All of the funds necessary to provide shoes for these wonderful kids are donated by people who want to make a difference. It doesn't take much; most of the donations are for \$20 or less.

Whenever people are willing to give up a small piece of their time or money, we can change lives. The next time you are faced with the decision to donate to the cause of your choice, remember that the act of giving can many times be more significant than the size of the gift. Even when that gift is a giant pair of sneakers.

Derek Knowlton has worked in the credit union industry for the past 16 years and is currently the chief marketing officer for University Federal Credit Union in Salt Lake City.





## No Child Should EVER Go Hungry

There are 56,000 children along the Wasatch Front who qualify for free school lunch. That's enough people to fill the Vivint Smart Home Arena more than three times.

Even after 30 years of volunteering with at-risk children through the Boys & Girls Club, Lynda Brown had no idea how many children along the Wasatch Front live in food insecurity. Until, that is, a can of SpaghettiOs went missing from the club pantry.

An 8-year-old girl had taken the can to feed herself and her four-year-old brother for the weekend. Instead of reprimanding the girl or punishing her, Brown said, a teacher asked the girl where she and her brother got food during the week. The children's mother had passed away and their father worked two minimum-wage jobs to barely make ends meet. The children got free breakfast and lunch at school during the week, but there was nothing to eat on the weekends.

And what about their dad? Where did his food come from, the teacher asked.

"Daddy doesn't eat with us," Brown remembers the girl responding. "He's a grownup and grownups don't need to eat."

It was a problem Brown hadn't realized even existed. But in that moment, she committed herself to

being part of the solution.

"I thought, 'I don't know what I'm going to do, I don't know how I'm going to do it, but I'm going to fix this,'" Brown said.

And KidsEat! was born.

The organization was launched



in Brown's basement four years ago with a single goal: to feed at-risk kids by providing enough food to see them through the weekend. KidsEat! packs seven meals in a backpack that kids pick up at school every Friday. The operating budget is "whatever we have," Brown said, which this year is about \$125,000. KidsEat! currently provides 800 backpacks every weekend to kids at 31 schools in the Murray and Jordan school districts.

KidsEat! relies on support organizations such as the Boys & Girls Club, Headstart and Neighborhood

House, as well as the schools themselves, to identify children living in food insecurity and spread the word about the program. Backpacks are delivered to participating schools and distributed there.

"We're thrilled to be working

in every neighborhood, going to every school.

"It is the entire valley," Brown said. "It might be that child who is now your child's best friend who comes to your home every day after school, eating you out of house and home."

KidsEat! runs a lean business model, which allows them to serve — and feed — as many children as possible. All the food that goes into the backpacks is either donated or bought with donated funds. Volunteers come to the KidsEat! pantry in Murray to sort food and pack the meal backpacks, and volunteer drivers deliver the bags to each participating school. The organization currently has about 50 regular volunteers — and drop-ins are also welcome.

Smaller groups, such as individuals, families or school classes, can also volunteer to pack "Buddy Bags," a pared-down version of the weekend backpack with non-perishable snacks and other food items that fit inside a

with the schools to be providing these kids food," Brown said. "Everyone was on board once they knew there was a problem, which a lot of them were shocked to learn."

Not only is food insecurity a problem, Brown said, it's a much bigger problem than most people realize. There are 56,000 children along the Wasatch Front who qualify for free lunch, which is enough people to fill the Vivint Smart Home Arena two times over. And 74 percent of people in Utah who need food assistance are employed. There are hungry kids liv-





## What's in the bag?

Each KidsEat! backpack includes non-perishable food items that equal seven meals that will see food-insecure children through the weekend. Most kids receiving KidsEat! backpacks qualify for free school breakfast and lunch. KidsEat! is always accepting donations of nutritious, non-perishable food such as instant oatmeal packets, Pop Tarts, BelVita Bars, small jars of peanut butter, soups (10 oz. cans of vegetable beef and chicken noodle), trail mix, tuna (can or pouch), granola bars, macaroni and cheese, ravioli, spaghetti and meatballs, pork and beans, chili, fruit and applesauce cups, squeeze applesauce, pudding cups, Vienna sausages, vegetables and shelf-stable milk. If you feel like you can donate, call 801-803-2505 to make an appointment to deliver your donation.



Large groups such as church congregations and companies can host "food packs" where they collect food and pack it into backpacks to be distributed to kids without enough food at home to eat full meals over the weekend. Photo courtesy of KidsEat!

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gallon-sized plastic bag.

For corporations that want to get involved, there are plenty of opportunities, said Geoff Partain, executive director of KidsEat! KidsEat! hosts two major fundraisers a year: Help Us Bloom, a spring garden party and silent auction; and the KidsEat! Golf Tournament, usually held in late summer. Both events raise money through donations as well as corporate sponsorships. Companies can also hold food drives, host an event to pack bags or raise money for the organization. One corporate partner has employees pay for the chance to wear jeans to work and then donates that money to KidsEat!

"We are willing to put together any kind of event, any kind of fundraiser for any company that wants to come forward," Partain said. "I don't know if we would be able to survive without the community involvement we have."

USANA, a global health sciences company headquartered in the Salt Lake Valley, first became introduced to KidsEat! through one of their employees who volunteered with the organization during the company's "world service week." The more USANA learned about KidsEat! and its mission, the more KidsEat! felt like a perfect fit for USANA's corporate philanthropy efforts.

"We loved what they were doing," said Ayugi Ntambwe-Kalala, senior programs manager at the USANA True Health Foundation. The KidsEat! mission of feeding kids was especially aligned with USANA's mission of improving people's quality of life through nutrition. "We want to use the expertise in our building to get the best out to people in not-the-greatest circumstances."

Beside a large financial donation every year, USANA's biggest contribution is a quarterly "food pack." The company clears out a warehouse and purchases enough food to provide 15 schools with 300 backpacks a week. Employees sign up for packing slots and spend two days packing the bags. USANA then stores the bags at its facility and delivers them to the partner schools every two weeks.

"The employees love it," Ntambwe-Kalala said. "The positions almost always fill up and we almost always finish before the scheduled time."

One reason they like volunteering for KidsEat!, she added, is because it's an organization serving people in their own communities.

"As we pack, the employees say,



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Publisher's Note: Caritas Quarterly is an affiliated publication of The Enterprise Newspaper Group Inc.

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*KidsEat! founder Lynda Brown poses with backpacks at the organization's Murray headquarters. Backpacks are distributed every two weeks to 31 schools in the Murray and Jordan school districts. Photo courtesy of KidsEat!*



*Organizing food drives and packing backpacks for KidsEat! is a popular Eagle Scout project, said founder Lynda Brown. Thanks to projects like this one, KidsEat! distributes 800 backpacks of food every week. Photo courtesy of KidsEat!*



*Corporate sponsors provide branded backpacks to hold enough non-perishable food to provide kids in need with seven weekend meals. Photo courtesy of KidsEat!*

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‘My kids know kids who are taking home this backpack,’ Ntambwe-Kalala said. ‘It’s very real and they can connect to it on a personal level.’

That personal connection has been key to the success and growth of KidsEat!, Partain said. When the organization was first getting off the ground, it took a while for the concept to take hold, but communities are becoming more and more aware of the food insecurity around them.

‘I don’t think people really got it at the time. I don’t think we really got it at the time,’ Partain said. ‘The more kids we fed, the more we saw there were more kids who need food.’

Partain remembers one little girl in particular who held a KidsEat! backpack and said it was the most food she’d ever had.

‘Those stories are what keep me going,’ Partain said.

They are also what keep the organization going.

Brown said her goal for next year’s operating budget is \$250,000. That would allow KidsEat! to provide more weekend backpacks and also support food-insecure kids through the summer. KidsEat! currently distributes Buddy Bags through summer camps and summer schools. Any kid who needs one can take one, Brown said, no questions asked.

‘If a kid thinks they need food, we give it to them, without discrimination,’ she said.

Discrimination, or judgment about people’s circumstances, can sometimes stop individuals or companies from offering their help, Brown said. But children are innocent victims of circumstances they can’t control and KidsEat! sees the help they provide as a ‘hand up, not a handout.’

‘Kids can’t take advantage of a system because they don’t even know there is a system,’ Brown said. ‘A kid just knows if she’s hungry. And I’m going to feed that child.’



*KidsEat! is staffed almost entirely by volunteers who shop for food, sort food and pack and deliver backpacks. Photo courtesy of KidsEat!*



*As a corporate partner, USANA holds a quarterly ‘food pack’ event, stores the finished backpacks at their facility and delivers the backpacks to partner schools every two weeks. Photo courtesy of KidsEat!*





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# OVERCOMING FINANCIAL ILLITERACY

## Preparing Utah students for a lifetime of dealing with finances is the goal of Junior Achievement of Utah

The U.S. Census Bureau reported that, in 2017, the median household income in the United States was \$59,039. Yet according to the Federal Reserve, in that same year the average American household carried \$137,063 in debt, with mortgages claiming the majority of what people owe.

The combination of high debt and low financial literacy can have devastating effects for families, especially children growing up in financially unstable environments. And it is exactly that cycle of instability that Junior Achievement (JA) aims to address.

JA was first introduced in Utah 60 years ago as an after-school program, said Jaime Argyle, director of corporate and individual engagement for Junior Achievement of Utah. As part of the program, high school students would develop and execute a business idea. Thirty years ago, JA introduced an in-classroom program for students from kindergarten through 12th grade.

The program uses a standardized curriculum that comes from the umbrella organization, JA USA, and focuses on basic business, entrepreneurship and financial literacy principles. Companies sponsor schools to receive the program — a sponsorship is \$10,000 per school — and the curriculum is taught by volunteers who receive training from JA of Utah.

Taking the program directly into schools, especially at no cost to the schools, allows JA to reach a larger number of at-risk students who wouldn't be exposed to those kinds of business principles otherwise.

"We really believe that kids can't be what they can't see," Argyle said. "A volunteer comes into the classroom and that might be the most successful person they've met so far in their life."

In fact, according to an alumni report JA conducted in 2016, one in three JA alumni credit the program with influencing their career decision, and one in five work in the same field as their JA volunteer.

Brian Hamilton, a large-group sales rep with Cigna, recently finished teaching a JA course to first-graders at Whittier Elementary School in Salt Lake City, one of two schools in the Salt Lake Valley sponsored by Cigna. On the last day of the course, the students wrote an advertising plan

for their dream businesses. Business ideas ranged from "Extra Disneyland" to "Kittens School" to a Pokemon store where customers can trade cards, play together and make up their own characters. But the most important component: "A fair boss."

"The kids loved it," Hamilton said of the six-week course. "They're super-engaged. I always have lots of volunteers."

A first-time JA volunteer, Hamilton loved the experience as well. He enjoyed the chance to give back and the chance to share practical skills and information that will benefit kids' lives for years to come.

"I think it's important to not get so caught up in the procedures of my own life that I forget there are kids who don't have a good home life, or parents to help them with their homework and show them the importance of school," Hamilton said. "And I think this information has really practical applications. We all learned things in school that we never used again. But everything they learn in JA applies

to real life. We want to show the students if they abide by the principles of JA, the sky really is the limit."

While elementary school students might not be putting business skills to use right away, participating in

JA can have an immediate positive impact, said Peggy Lowe, who teaches first grade at Whittier Elementary.

"They get a bigger understanding of the world outside of them," she said. "And they get to see business men and women, which I think is especially important for kids in this area where there are a lot of people with only high school diplomas and hourly jobs. This shows them something beyond that."

And it worked. At the end of Hamilton's last class, he asked the students what plans they had for their future careers. One boy raised his hand and told Hamilton, "I want to work where you work, doing what you do, because then I could see you there every day."

Volunteers like Hamilton are critical to the success of JA, said Amy Bosworth, chief development officer at Junior Achievement of Utah. There are







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## JA Alumni Educational Attainment

- 93%** have a High School Diploma or GED
- 67%** more likely to have advanced degree
- 30%** more likely to have a Bachelor's Degree



## JA Alumni Career Aspirations

- 38%** are satisfied with their career
- 1 in 3** credit JA for influencing their career decision
- 1 in 5** work in the same field as their JA mentor



## The Impact of JA

- 30%** say it helped them learn to better manage money
- 90%** are confident in their ability to manage money
- 69%** of graduating college seniors take out loans vs. 55% of JA alumni
- 47%** of JA alumni pay off student loans in 10 years vs. average of 21 years

### FROM page 8

currently 8,468 volunteers working to deliver the JA curriculum to schools around the state. Corporate donors are also key to bringing the JA curriculum to as many schools as possible, especially to Title I schools that couldn't otherwise afford to have the program. And schools benefit from a program that enhances the core curriculum while preparing students for successful careers and a financially stable future.

"Once it's at a school, the program is really embraced," Bosworth said. "The teachers love having those mentors coming in to the classroom, and that model creates such a great partnership because businesses can complement what the teachers are trying to do in the classroom."

In addition to the classroom curriculum, JA also operates JA City. Located on the fourth floor of the Discovery Gateway museum in downtown Salt Lake City, JA City is a miniature city, complete with storefronts and a town square, where students participate in two hands-on, immersive experiences and put into practice the concepts and principles they've learned from the JA curriculum.

In the first experience, Biz Town, fifth graders become business owners.

"The whole goal of the day is for kids to run a business," Bosworth said. "They take out a business loan and pay off the loan by the end of the day."

The second program, Finance Park, is for eight-graders. In that experience, each student receives an avatar — for example, a car mechanic with three kids. Each student spends the day as their avatar doing things like buying a car, furniture and food,

with the goal of ending the day with a balanced budget.

Practicing the skills necessary to succeed at Finance Park is important, Bosworth said, but the perspective it gives students is the most valuable takeaway. Eighth grade can be a crossroads and one goal of Finance Park is to save kids from dropping out once they hit high school.

"It can be a turning point in a lot of their lives," Bosworth said. "They start to understand, 'If I drop out and make \$10 an hour, that's not going to take me very far.' They're recognizing how empowering more education can be."

Currently one-third of the fifth-graders in Utah are covered by Biz Town, many of them sponsored by corporate donors. It costs a corporate donor \$2,500 to send a class to JA City. Junior Achievement of Utah also recently launched a capital campaign to finance a second JA City in Orem.

Sean Jolley was introduced to JA when two of his kids — now ages 16 and 12 — attended Biz Town.

"If you were to ask them what was the best thing that happened to you your whole fifth-grade year, to this day they would say, hands down, Biz Town," Jolley said.

So, when Jolley came to Salt Lake City about a year ago as a regional vice president with Cigna, and was tasked with finding an opportunity for corporate volunteering and philanthropy, JA came immediately to mind. In addition to sponsoring two schools and sending members of his team, such as Hamilton, to teach the curriculum, Jolley also serves as the newest member of the JA board.

One mission statement at Cigna, Jolley said, is that employees have more than a job — they have a career in helping others. The mission of JA, to improve the current and future lives of students by exposing them early to

principles of business and economics, seemed a like a perfect match.

"That these small interactions have such an impact and that ripple through these students' lives, that just solidified my decision to align ourselves with this organization," Jolley said.

He was particularly interested in sponsoring low-income Title I schools — such as Whittier Elementary — to help the students there expand their horizons and see the kinds of career and life options available to them.

"When you ask the kids what they are aspiring to, the bar is not very high," Jolley said.

Through the JA curriculum they not only learn things that will help their future education and career choices, but lessons that can be applied to their current lives. For example, Jolley recently taught a lesson about risk and reward in business. In the scenario, a hot dog stand owner gets in a pinch when his vendor's truck breaks down. The class discussed the different choices the hot dog stand owner could make to solve the problem, and the consequences of each of those choices.

But then Jolley took the lesson a step further and talked to the students about how risk and reward apply to their lives today. For example, they might want to come home and watch TV after school instead of doing their homework, but what would the risks and rewards of that decision be?

As much as students benefit from JA, however, the companies and volunteers that support the program have much to gain as well, Jolley said. Cigna gives each employee eight paid hours a year to spend on volunteer efforts, but that short-term sacrifice pays long-term dividends. Volunteering with JA has given his team a common goal and sense of purpose, Jolley said.

"The camaraderie, the stories we're telling each other from the classroom,

have been really fun and inspiring," he said.

And beyond the benefits to employees themselves, corporations also benefit from prioritizing corporate philanthropy and responsibility. Communities embrace companies that give back to them, Jolley said, and he often encourages other businesses to find opportunities for service like the one Cigna has taken on.

"To involve ourselves in the community at this level, and to be passionate about it, you can see that people are impressed and appreciative of those efforts and it definitely raises our profile in the community," Jolley said.

Argyle and Bosworth, of JA, have also seen the benefits their corporate sponsors enjoy.

"If people work for a company that gives back to the community, they're more loyal and they function at a higher level as employees," Argyle said.

Bosworth added, "We have an excellent program that makes people feel good. At the end of the day they feel like they've made a difference."

And the more corporations that partner with JA, the more difference the organization can make. While JA receives a small amount of money from grants, the vast majority of the operating budget comes from corporate sponsorships and donations, Bosworth said. The more money JA receives, the more schools can be covered by the program. JA currently reaches 14.5 percent of the students in Utah, but the organization hopes to expand into Utah County and further south into more rural school districts.

"More schools covered by more funds means more kids are touched," Bosworth said. "The beauty of JA at the end of the day is that it's adults caring about kids. You can't quantify that feeling for a kid to have an adult believe in them."



# GIVING STUDENTS A HELPFUL HAND THROUGH HANDS-ON LEARNING

Cigna applauds the outstanding efforts of Junior Achievement of Utah on behalf of students throughout the state. We're honored to work with Junior Achievement on programs including their experiential learning site, JA City, where students build such skills as critical thinking, collaboration and problem solving. Together, we're creating a stronger, healthier future.



**Together, all the way.®**





## FOUR STEPS TO RECOVERY

*The First Step House program is built on four main programs: residential treatment, outpatient services, ongoing case management and transitional housing, and recidivism and relapse reduction*

To help people understand what it takes to sustain recovery from addiction and substance use disorder, Shawn McMillen, executive director of First Step House, a residential treatment program headquartered in downtown Salt Lake City, asks them to engage in a little thought experiment.

Take a person suffering from substance abuse disorder and imagine they had cancer or diabetes instead. What kind of medical treatment would they receive? Thirty days of inpatient care and nothing more? And how would society view them? As people who got what they deserved? Or as people suffering and in need of help to treat and manage a disease?

Substance abuse disorder is a disease, a medical condition just like cancer or diabetes, McMillen said. And seeing it that way is the first — and most critical — step to treating and

managing it successfully.

“I feel strongly that substance use disorder is a chronic condition,” McMillen said. “But when treated and managed, people can live productive, healthy, full lives. They become citizens. Substance abuse disorder is something that responds very well to treatment.”

First Step House opened in Salt Lake City in 1958 with exactly that goal in mind — to use evidence-based treatment methodology paired with long-term case management and community support — to “help people build lives of meaning, purpose and recovery.”

Today, First Step House is built on four main programs.

The first is subacute residential treatment. Subacute is one step down from hospitalization, McMillen said. Residents come to First Step House

once they have completed detox and any psychiatric or other health issues have been stabilized. The vast majority — about 75 percent — of First Step House residents come to the program through the criminal justice system. First Step House operates two residential treatment facilities — a 64-bed location in the Fairpark neighborhood of Salt Lake City and a 72-bed location on First Step House’s recovery campus in downtown Salt Lake City.

The average residential or inpatient treatment stay is 90 days, McMillen said, and most residents of First Step House qualify for public assistance to help them cover the cost. First Step House uses “manualized treatment,” meaning residents complete workbooks, homework assignments and give presentations on the stages of their recovery. First Step House also employs evidence-

based therapeutic methods, including cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), rational emotive behavioral therapy (REBT) and moral reconnection therapy (MRT) in both individual and group settings.

Overall, 53 percent of people who enroll complete the program successfully. Nationally, the completion rate for similar programs is 47 percent. Violence, the threat of violence or stealing from other residents or staff members will get you automatically expelled from the First Step House program. A relapse — referred to in the recovery community as an incidence of use — doesn’t get you automatically kicked out. “An incidence of use is a confirmation of your diagnosis,” McMillen said. “We’re

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The mission of First Step House is to help people build lives of meaning, purpose, and recovery. Founded in 1958, FSH has evolved into a dual-diagnosis enhanced, behavioral health treatment and housing provider for no and low-income individuals and families. We have been a consistent leader in the Salt Lake metro area delivering evidence-based interventions and achieving positive outcomes for individuals who have chronic behavioral health conditions, histories of homelessness, mental illness, unemployment, criminal justice involvement, and primary health concerns.

The scope of services we offer include:

- Substance use disorder and mental health assessment
- Residential and outpatient treatment
- Recovery residence services
- Time-unlimited Employment Support
- Housing for Veterans and Non-Veterans
- Peer Support Services
- Comprehensive Case Management
- Primary Health Care and Dental Services
- Long-term Recovery Management

OUR VISION

**Our goal is to serve  
5,000 people per year**

by 2028 using the highest-quality, evidence-based, recovery-oriented services possible.

We currently operate two residential treatment facilities, two outpatient treatment centers, and six transitional housing facilities in Salt Lake City, Utah. We are also building a 75-unit Permanent Supportive Housing facility for individuals with histories of homelessness and serious mental illness.

Your gift is critical to our ability to continue providing treatment, housing, and employment support to some of the most vulnerable individuals in Utah. Visit our website at [www.firststephouse.org](http://www.firststephouse.org) for more details or to **donate today!**

# We're grateful for all you do.



We can't express in just a few words how much we appreciate your dedication. Thanks to your efforts you've made a difference in our community and had a positive effect on us all. For that and more we're grateful.

KeyBank thanks First Step House for making a difference.



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not going to kick you out of treatment for confirming your diagnosis but we will evaluate whether this is the best treatment option for you.”

A key component of inpatient treatment at First Step House is peer support. The program had been experiencing a 25 percent AWOL rate — in other words, a quarter of all residents were just walking out before they completed the program.

“That’s too big a number,” McMillen said.

Once the program introduced peer support, the AWOL rate went down to just 10 percent.

“A person with personal history is a big deal,” McMillen said.

That peer mentorship component is further strengthened by the fact that, currently, First Step House only accepts men. That decision is based on research that indicates gender-specific treatment is more successful.

“In mixed-gender treatment settings, women tend to help men get their needs met and not get their own needs met,” McMillen said.

Even with admittance restricted only to men, and even with recent expansions in capacity funded by state Medicaid expansion and funds from Operation Rio Grande, First Step House has a four-to-six month wait-

list. In the past 12 months, Salt Lake County as a whole has added 270 new treatment beds, McMillen said, and every facility is still operating at capacity.

“The reason for that waitlist is that there’s that much demand,” McMillen said.

The second piece of the First Step House program is outpatient treatment, which operates out of a building at 2200 S. State St. in Salt Lake. After 90 days in residential treatment, most people spend an additional 64 days on average in outpatient treatment. Evidence-based therapy continues in outpatient treatment, as well as family therapy. More than 50 percent of First Step House residents have active parental rights, McMillen said.

Case management services also kick into high gear during outpatient treatment, as individuals are working hard to find and keep jobs, stay stably housed and manage money and relationships all while maintaining their sobriety and recovery.

“They’re dealing with a lot of stressors,” McMillen said, “and everything is pretty raw.”

One of the assessment tools First Step House uses is called the Adverse Childhood Event Scale or ACES. ACES measures the number and severity of traumatic events —

CONTINUED next page



Executive Director Shawn McMillen is joined by Salt Lake City Mayor Jackie Biskupski as he speaks at the First Step House recovery campus. The campus is currently being expanded to include more than 100 units of supportive recovery housing. The units are expected to come online in 2020.

## First Step House Executive Leadership Team

### Shawn McMillen, MPA, ASUDC

*Executive Director*

Shawn began working within the field of substance abuse treatment services in 1987 at the University Neuropsychiatric Institute (UNI). After joining First Step House in 2003, Shawn earned his master’s in public administration (MPA) from the University of Utah, and in 2005, Shawn became the executive director of First Step House. During his tenure as executive director, First Step House treatment capacity has grown by 75 percent and its transitional housing capacity has grown by 200 percent. FSH annual revenues have grown by 157 percent.

### Austin Davis

*Associate Director*

Austin joined First Step House in 2008. Austin’s prior business management experience and his degree in business accounting provides him with the technical skills needed to solve the problems of the past while preparing for the opportunities of the future. As the associate director, Austin is responsible for all day-to-day operations at First Step House. Austin is a person in long-term recovery, a First Step House graduate, and an active member of the local recovery community. He currently serves as the board treasurer for USARA (Utah Support Advocates for Recovery Awareness).

### Jared Ferguson, LCSW

*Clinical Director*

Jared is a Utah native and licensed clinical social worker who completed his bachelor’s and master’s of social work degrees from the University of Utah in 2007 and 2008, respectively. Along with his MSW, Jared completed an emphasis in substance abuse treatment. During his graduate education, Jared completed two internships at the Utah State Prison, an experience that forever changed his outlook on issues of justice and social equality. Jared has since focused on the areas of criminal justice, mental health and evidence-based practices to address substance use disorders.

### Matthew Warthen

*Clinical Operations Director*

Matthew Warthen studied clinical psychology at the University of Utah and has a strong background in research and statistics. While at the University of Utah, Matthew led a research project studying addiction and he has published a number of articles in the areas of addiction and neurobiology. Matthew is currently working on increasing standards across the organization. This includes creating a better environment for clients and employees through developing management skills and improving internal processes. Matthew is working to further develop the use of empirical data to guide productivity, program development and client care.

### Rodney Symes

*Operations Director*

Rodney is a veteran in the realm of substance abuse treatment. He first began working in the field in 1999 as a house manager for the Alcohol Treatment Center, located in Salt Lake City. Soon afterward, Rodney advanced his skills by participating in the alcohol and drug program at the University of Utah. During his studies, Rodney performed his practicum at First Step House. He was asked to join the First Step House treatment team as a counselor in 2000. He graduated from the alcohol and drug program the following year and was promoted to the role of director of outpatient services in 2004. In this capacity, Rodney assisted with the development and growth of the department, a task which eventually led to his current position as director of operations.

### Jazz Hamilton

*Human Resource Director*

Jazz began his career at First Step House in October 2011 as the human resources manager and since then he has used his skills and experiences to recruit, hire and train qualified staff who are committed to the First Step House mission, possess an outward mindset and are highly invested in the success of our patients. In 2016, Jazz joined the executive team in the role of human resources director. He looks forward to continuing to contribute to First Step House while embracing the challenges, rewards and triumphs along the way.

### Kendall Banks

*Development Director*

After moving to Utah in 2016, Kendall quickly became aware of some of the most pressing matters in downtown Salt Lake City and eagerly joined First Step House with a desire to address those issues. She feels deeply privileged to be a part of the First Step House family and looks forward to working collaboratively to address the complex needs of the Greater Salt Lake community and the individuals First Step House proudly serves.



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for example, witnessing an episode of domestic violence, incarceration or homelessness — a person has experienced in their lifetime. Three or more such events indicate a probability of instability. According to McMillen, more than 70 percent of individuals who come to First Step House score a six or higher, highlighting the need for ongoing care and support.

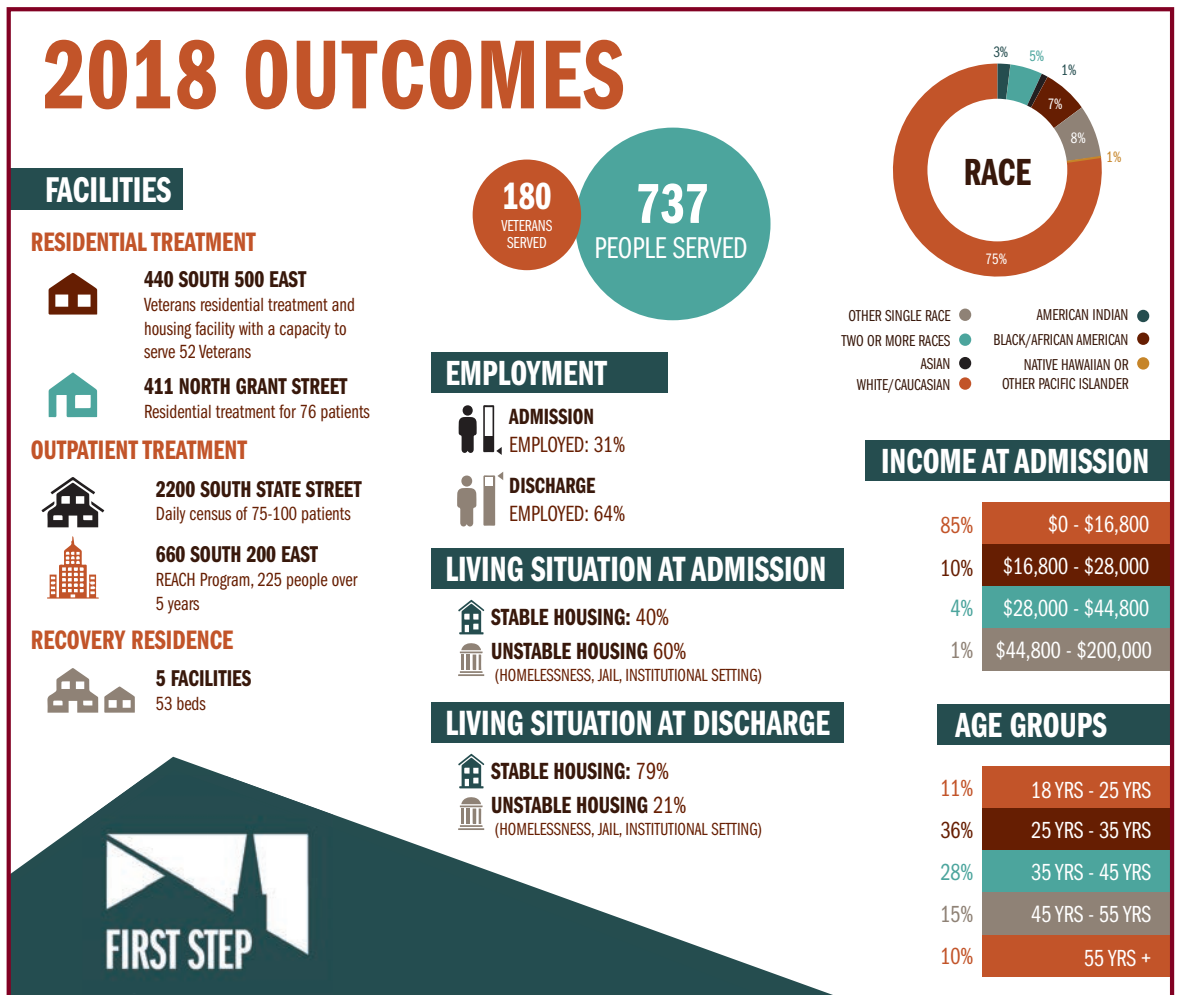
For individuals who need a little more time to establish that stability, First Step House operates five transitional housing properties with a total of 48 beds — the third piece of the First Step House program. Residents can stay in transitional housing for 12 months, McMillen said, but the average stay is closer to seven months. Transitional housing is assigned based on need. For example, individuals with a history of chronic homelessness or a tendency to destabilize after residential treatment are given priority.

First Step House currently has construction underway to expand its supportive housing, with 115 additional units scheduled to come online in 2020 as part of the downtown

recovery campus. First Step House also operates Valor House, 76 units of transitional housing for veterans located on the VA campus.

The final piece of the First Step House program targets the long-term support that successful recovery requires. Through the Salt Lake County “pay for success” program, First Step House established REACH — which stands for Recovery, Engagement, Assessment, Career Development and Housing. The program aims to reduce criminal and substance abuse recidivism by targeting the full spectrum of factors that can lead to recidivism and relapse. Through the county program, REACH is funded by private partnerships — essentially investors — and if the program is successful the investors will be paid back by the county. For REACH, success would be a 35 percent reduction in recidivism for three years. The program will hit the two-year mark in July of this year, McMillen said.

It is this final piece of ongoing support where it becomes most critical to understand substance abuse disorder as a chronic disease, McMillen said. Just like the cancer survival rate



skyrockets if patients can go five years without a relapse, individuals in substance abuse recovery are exponentially more likely to stay in long-term recovery if they can go five years without an incidence of use. But, just like a cancer patient goes in for annual check-ups and scans, long-term recovery from substance abuse takes constant vigilance and contact from the recovery community.

Case management from First Step House is time-unlimited for anyone who has enrolled in the program, McMillen said. Those ongoing services are also referred to as chronic disease management or recovery management.

“We’re not only with the guy to get him ready for the job and get the job,” McMillen said. “We’re with him a year later when he’s ready to ask for a raise, and two years after that when he needs training to change careers.”

For program participants who have fallen out of contact, First Step House initiates a tailored re-engagement protocol. The goal is to stay engaged for 60 months, or

five years. For individuals who can stay sober for those five years, the likelihood that they’ll still be clean and sober at 10 years is 80 percent, McMillen said.

“The folks we serve don’t have a lot of social capital or recovery capital so it’s important for us to be there to fill the gap so they have the same access to opportunity and advantage as someone else,” McMillen said.

First Step House has 103 employees to execute all these program elements, including 30 mental health clinicians and a large number of 24-hour staff, including client advocates and case managers. This year the organization’s operating budget is \$7.9 million, with the majority coming from the Salt Lake County Division of Behavioral Health. The organization is also working to grow philanthropic contributions — currently about \$1.3 million of the operating budget comes from corporate partners including Wells Fargo, American Express and Synchrony Bank.

More money coming in to the organization would mean more residential treat-

ment beds and more units of supportive housing — in other words, an increased supply of treatment options to meet the ever-growing demand.

There are many factors at play contributing to the demand for substance abuse treatment. Income disparity is certainly a contributor, McMillen said. The average rent along the Wasatch Front, for example, is 60 percent to 70 percent of the minimum wage. And low occupancy rates further disadvantage individuals with a criminal history.

Opioid abuse in particular sheds some light on other factors at play. For example, 72 percent of heroin addicts began their substance abuse after receiving a prescription for a legitimate health problem. The prevalence of opioid abuse has presented serious problems, but it has created opportunities as well.

“The tragedy of the opioid epidemic is that it’s crossed all the socioeconomic levels,” McMillen said. “But that means we have legislators and other people who have a direct connection. So, while it’s tragic, we see more resources being brought to bear than ever before.”

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