



September 2022 Newsletter for Families

Riverhouse by the numbers:

Total number of children (in 6 different classrooms)	Capacity = 71 15 infants, 25 toddlers, 31 pre-K
# of families with more than 1 child at RH	9
Total number of staff (currently)	18 full-time; 11 part-time
Total number of new vs returning families	Approx. 40% new, 60% returning
Operating budget for 2022-2023	\$903,740.
Amount of \$ needed through grants and other donations in order to meet budget	\$100,000 (fundraisers, grants, & Colorado Gives)

Riverhouse History

Riverhouse was started in 2002 by Lindsay Johnson. There were only six children then! Within 5 years that number was up to 67 children, ages 6 weeks to 5 years. In 2011 our 1.5 acre parcel of land on Florida Road was donated and a capital campaign began in 2013 to build a new facility. This successful campaign raised over a million dollars to build state-of-the-art classrooms and three separate playgrounds. The new building has been in use for less than 10 years, and many of the people who spearheaded the capital campaign drive are still affiliated with the center. More recently, Riverhouse survived the Covid pandemic that started in March of 2020; many other childcare centers weren't so lucky. We are so grateful for everyone who stuck with Riverhouse during those trying times - parents, staff, & other supporters. We are still recovering from that difficult time, but the future is looking brighter!

GOOD NEWS - Music & Dance are coming back to Riverhouse!

Last month we were the grateful recipients of an LPEA grant for \$5,000. Five thousand doesn't sound like much, but it makes all the difference - in this case, it means that our three older classrooms (Eagles, Falcons & Blue Jays) get to enjoy the talents of area musicians in their classrooms. Starting on Wednesday September 7th, local musician Denise Leslie is providing music lessons with her ukelele and other musical gifts... This will be happening twice a week until the end of the first semester (through December).

These classes provide joy to the children and are a morale booster for all of us teachers.



Who doesn't like a little more music in their lives?

Meet the new director:

Becky Malecki has been Riverhouse's new director since June. She has been involved in education, nonprofits, and human services for most of her 40 year career. She has a Master's degree in Human Development & Family Studies from Colorado State University and a Master's in School Administration from the University of North Carolina.

After growing up in Chicago (a definite cosmic mistake) she moved to Boulder to attend college. Post-bachelor's she moved to Fort Collins. There she met her husband and they raised a family by adopting two of their foster children (now grown). Becky worked as a child protection social worker and a civil court mediator for 10 years before becoming a middle school teacher (teaching allowed her to spend more time with her family & many animals on their small farm). There was a much too long detour in North Carolina working for the Dept of Defense's educational system (as a gifted resource teacher and math coach). Then came an amicable divorce (mediated of course), and a realization that Durango could now be home. Becky moved here in 2016 and plans to never leave. She spends her free time like many of us here do - camping, hiking, biking, and skiing, plus enjoying dinners, book discussions, and game nights with friends. Besides children she is passionate about animals (especially dogs, horses, and wildlife), social justice, travel, and preserving what remaining nature we have on this planet.

Meet your new Board President:

Kelly Tregillus joined the board in December 2021 and took over as Board President in May 2022. She and her husband Nate are both Fort Lewis Alumni and moved back to Durango from San Francisco in 2016. They have two children that attended Riverhouse, their daughter, Emslie, who is now 6 and in First Grade, and their son, Desi, who is a 3.5 year old in the Falcon classroom this year.

Kelly works full-time as a Director with Upwork, an online work marketplace based in San Francisco. Kelly also co-founded Cafe au Play with her mother-in-law, Liza Tregillus, back in 2017. Cafe au Play is a baby and toddler friendly indoor and outdoor play space for caregivers to connect.

Kelly and her family love to bike around Durango, ski in the winter time and spend time on the water. .0



How did Cheers do? – Great!

Thanks to all of you who bought tickets, attended, and volunteered to make this event a success. Cheers for Children is our biennial fundraiser. It was held at River Bend Ranch (just north of town) on July 31st; happily, the sun broke through the clouds so we could enjoy this beautiful venue both indoors and out. There was a band, silent auction, food and libations. There were 300 balloons with varying prizes to be discovered when you popped them (the big one was an electric bike), there was a free photo booth, and lots of fun items and experiences to bid on. So... the goal was to make \$15,000 and we made \$18,000, so that's a success. Phew! And we'll do it all again in 2024! Special thanks to Amanda Byers, and Jessica Iudiciani who joined Kelly Tregillus, putting in countless hours, to make this event happen.



DATES FOR YOUR CALENDAR:

- September Board Meeting ----- September 15th (Thursday, 4:30 - 6 pm)
- **MANDATORY Parent Meeting - October 7th (Friday, 6 to 7 pm)**
(Childcare provided; wine, beer & hors d'oeuvres also provided)
- Fall Festival ----- October 21st (Friday 4 to 6 pm - food provided!)
- Thanksgiving Break ----- November 21st - 25th (Mon-Fri)
- Holiday Bazaar -----December date TBA
- Christmas Break ----- December 19th - 30th
(Children return Tuesday Jan. 3rd due to New Year's holiday)

What's happening with the cost of

childcare? From Colorado Public Radio:
(<https://denverite.com/newsletter-signup/>)

In Denver the average cost of infant care is \$1,730 per month! That's more than the cost of many mortgages. Why???

Profit margins are thin in childcare centers. The costs are just so high. It's impossible to provide affordable care for most people without government subsidies. For this reason, more than 10% of childcare centers in Colorado have closed over the past two years, even though most childhood teachers are paid close to the minimum wage, and don't receive benefits.

About 70% of all costs goes to cover payroll because the teacher - child ratio is so low (regulated by the state). For infants it's 1 to 4, for toddlers 1 to 5, and for preschoolers 1 to 10. This is a far cry from elementary schools where teachers typically have 20 to 30 students in one room. Then, there's the costs associated with rent, utilities, and administrative expenses. (At Riverhouse food also adds a fair amount to our overhead). The only solution, experts say, is more public support to offset what is being referred to as "a childcare crisis," - a crisis that is now affecting employment and thus the economy.

Staff Work Week

Yes, we were closed from August 22nd to the 26th. We know (especially the half dozen moms on staff) what a hardship this was and we don't take it lightly. To stay in compliance with state regulations we needed to have staff attend all day trainings on First Aid, CPR, and Medicine Administration, provided by our contract nurse, Kasey Rey. In addition, we had trainings on our curriculum (Creative Curriculum), assessments, and the staff handbook. Lastly, we spent almost two days cleaning the center and preparing the rooms for the new year.

Watch: Molly Wright: How to Thive by 5 on Youtube & be inspired!

So Thank You for your patience and understanding about this week. !

The Facility Had Had a Face-Lift!

Thanks to our new caretaker/maintenance man!, Dave Labato. Riverhouse is looking better than it has for a long time. Dave has been doing a little bit of everything including fixing drywall, painting, fixing sinks and toilets, refinishing the floors, fixing windows, cleaning out dryer vents, and making our storage areas much more usable. We are so lucky that he responded to our cry for help!

The whole staff also pitched in to do deep cleaning the week we were closed. We also had all the carpets professionally cleaned. Yay for fall cleaning!

Meet the Staff

<p><u>Eagles Lead:</u> Rebecca Peckumn Pt Aide: Ameena Hobbs 1-4:30 Tues, Thur & Fri</p>	<p><u>Falcons Lead:</u> Mic Anderson Aide: Callie Moss Aide: Shannon Metsker</p>
<p><u>Blue Jays Lead:</u> Mikhaela Johnson In training: Katelyn Parks Pt Aide: Hannah Chapman MWF 1-4:30 PT Aide: Makayla Tahe - am 8-12:30</p>	<p><u>Sparrows Lead:</u> Brooke McMinn Aide: Jess Alvarez Pt Aide: Callie Decker - M,W,F Pt Aide: Jayda Arguelles, Daily 1-4:30</p>
<p><u>Hummingbirds Lead:</u> in-process Aide: Angelique Cather Aide: Lupita Gonzalez Aide: Ashley Hunt</p>	<p><u>Chickadees Lead:</u> Janel Drelicharz Aide: Darcy Diaz Pt Aide: Phoebe Hunter (T & Th) Pt Aide: Martina Redfox, W,Th Fri: 1- 4:30</p>

About the Staff:

Admin Team - Lexi Dalton McMinn. Lexi loves to hike and fish with her newlywed husband, and their big dogs (Pit Bull, and German Shepherd mix!)

Admin Team - Chloe Weybright. Chloe is also a hiker, who also likes swimming, knitting, and traveling (she has family and friends in Utah & Texas, as well as Bayfield).

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1. Amber Platero - Amber's daughter, Zoe, is in the Eagles room. Amber loves being Zoe's mom; when she's not spending time with her family she enjoys reading.
 2. Angelique Cather - Angelique comes from Co. Springs; she loves to read, hike and be with her pets (2 cats, a Lab, and some fish!)
 3. Ashley Hunt - Ashley loves the theater. Come see her in the play, As You Like It, with the Merely Players here in Durango (playing through October 2nd).
 4. Brooke McMinn - Brooke likes to play the piano and paint in her spare time - or enjoy baked goods such as banana bread and cookies!
 5. Callie Decker - Callie is the mom to two preschool girls (Lumi & Leila); in her free time (ha!) she likes to mountain bike and bake for her lucky family.
 6. Callie Moss - Callie loves the outdoors, especially playing golf.
 7. Darcy Diaz - Darcy is a Colombian immigrant with a bachelor's degree in children's education. She has a 2 year old daughter named Valerie. She enjoys spending time with her extended family in Durango and is working to learn more English.
 8. Janel Drelicharz - Janel is mom to baby Jocelyn. She and her husband love to travel, hike, and just spend time in the mountains.
 9. Jess Alvarez - Jess is a big people person who loves spending time with friends and family.
 10. Katelyn Parks - Katelyn comes to us from Kansas. In her free time she loves to travel, read, crochet, and float on the river or lake. She also likes to dye her hair vibrant colors!
 11. Lupita Gonzalez is our newest full-time staff member. She loves to travel (she just went to visit family in Mexico), and loves music and dance. Lupita is a peaceful soul who loves dogs as well as children.
 12. Mic Anderson likes to hunt and fish, go shopping (for the right clothes to hunt and fish!) and have fun with friends and family.
 13. Mikhaela Johnson - Mikhaela loves to hang out with friends and family (especially her nephews), be outside (especially with her cat) and go shopping.

14. Rebecca Peckumn - is from New Mexico. She loves to ride around in the mountains in her jeep, and check out new places!
15. Shannon Metsker - Shannon loves to swim, kayak & snowboard (a water person!) and is almost always up for an adventure.

Part-time Staff:

1. Margaret Brown - in the kitchen! And has been for 15 + years! Margaret is the creative sort, so when she's not creating in the kitchen she's making cards, scrap-booking or delighting her family.
2. Ameena Hobbs - in the Eagles Room. Ameena is majoring in psychology at the Fort. She loves doing art (including printmaking), taking walks, and longboarding, and looks forward to skiing at Purgatory this winter.
3. Hannah Chapman - in Blue Jays Room. Hannah comes to us from Indiana. She is majoring in early childhood ed at the Fort. She loves hiking, reading, and doing ceramics (she makes things!)
4. Jayda Arguelles - in Sparrows Room. Jayda is majoring in environmental conservation management at the Fort, so naturally she loves the outdoors - especially hiking and camping.
5. Makayla Tahe - in the Blue Jays Room. Makayla is majoring in early childhood education at the Fort! She enjoys reading and writing, physical pursuits, and exploring new places. She also loves to hang out with her sisters and other family members in Tuba, Arizona.
6. Martina Redfox - in Chickadees Room. Martina is majoring in nursing at the Fort.

And our awesome subs (this place can't run smoothly without them!)

- Kim Rabick - Kym Parino - Saige Hanson Fogarty - Hillary Atler - Mady Brand

Kim R has 4 grandchildren, and enjoys card-making with Margaret.

Kym P likes to travel, watch movies, & enjoys spa activities!

Saige has many talents, including showing dogs and teaching line dancing.

Hillary is another dog lover, who also enjoys the outdoors.

Mady is another thespian, who works with the Merely Players.

KNOW ANYONE LOOKING FOR WORK??

And despite what you see above - we are still understaffed! We are in need of the following:

1. A part-time kitchen aide
2. A Tues-Thurs all day aide for the Sparrows Room
3. A full-time aide for the Chickadees

DONATIONS GLADLY ACCEPTED....

Want to help our overworked and underpaid staff? Bring your gently used donations of clothes or household goods (think: blankets, lamps, a crock pot, etc.) and donate them to Riverhouse - we'll be sure they get re-loved by one of our staff. Donations can be dropped off in the cubbies in the lobby (under the stairs).

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