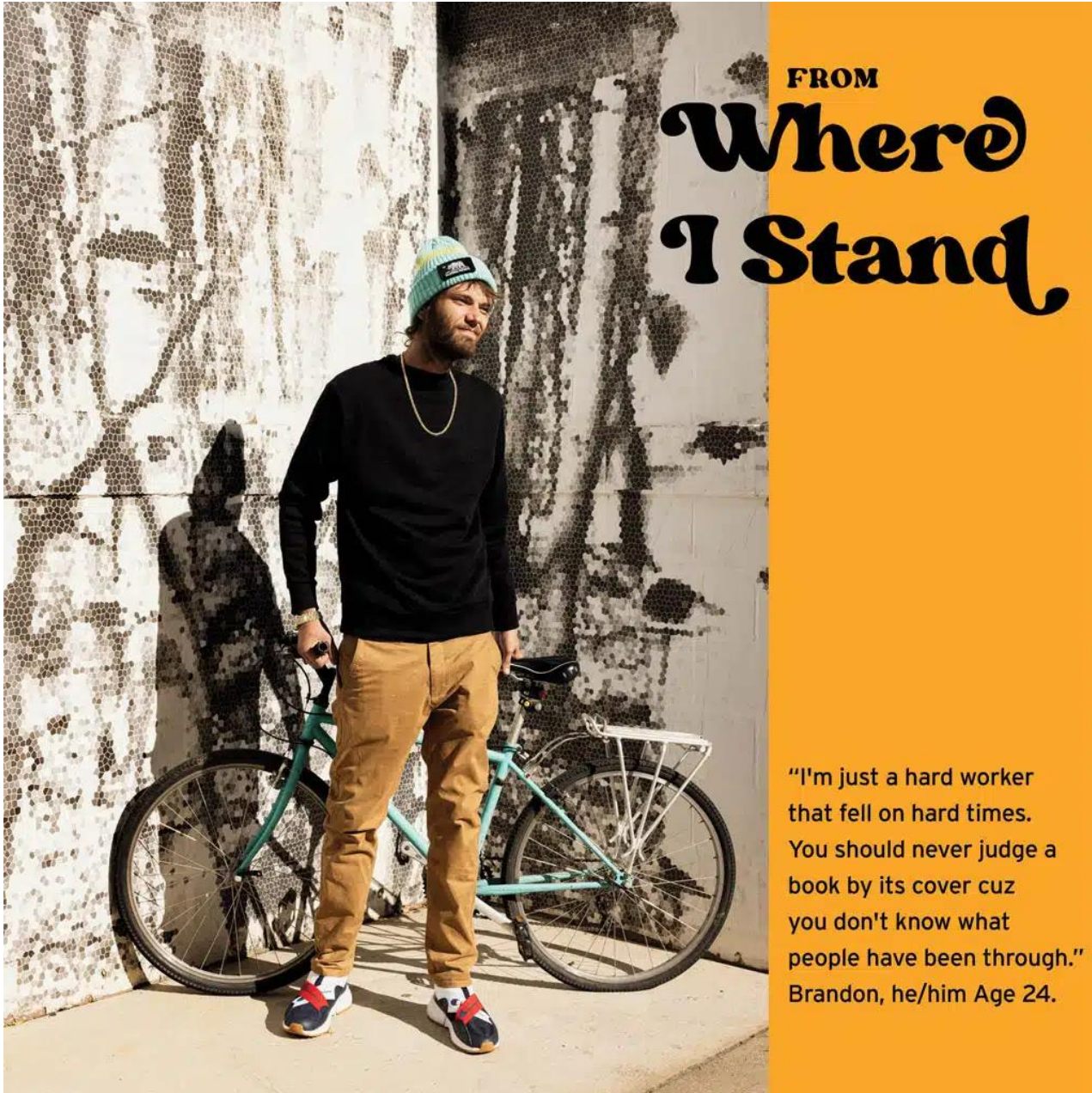


# TGTHR expands on home, other fronts

Shelley Widhalm



FROM  
**Where  
I Stand**

"I'm just a hard worker that fell on hard times. You should never judge a book by its cover cuz you don't know what people have been through."  
Brandon, he/him Age 24.

BOULDER — [TGTHR](#), in its aim to end youth homelessness in Northern Colorado, is expanding its reach to Denver and scouting a second location in Larimer County.

“The need is huge. We see hundreds of young people every year in our programs and new young people entering our community looking for services,” said Alex Bergland, director of communications for TGTHR. “We’re chatting with other communities that are seeing an uptick in need as well.”

TGTHR, a Boulder-based nonprofit founded in 1966, serves youth ages 12 to 24 at the Source Drop-In Center and ages 12 to 21 at the Source Overnight Shelter, plus provides a residential program called Chase House to transition 12- to 18-year-olds in the state system into stable, secure housing. TGTHR’s service area extends from Denver to the Wyoming border and, since opening, has served more than 14,000 youth.

“We are focusing on other communities to help them address the need,” Bergland said. “The more communities with services, the more we can prevent youth homelessness and can intervene and make sure it’s short-lived. ... It’s really important we focus on intervening as soon as a person starts experiencing homelessness.”

The state will provide \$4 million to TGTHR for FY 2023, half of it to renovate and expand the Source and the rest to cover the costs of supportive services at a 56-unit permanent supportive housing project for youth in Denver. That project will be based on TGTHR’s 40-unit supportive housing program called 1440 Pine, the only youth homeless shelter north of Denver.

The 1440 Pine shelter is an affordable apartment building that follows a Housing First model as a foundation to provide youth ages 18 to 24 experiencing chronic homelessness with stable housing and supportive services — they qualify by taking a statewide assessment identifying their vulnerability to chronic homelessness.

TGTHR opened 1440 Pine in 2019 after seeing youth at the Source needing more extensive services and lacking the resources to get into affordable housing, the main barrier they faced to achieve stable, permanent housing as identified by several of TGTHR’s evaluations and studies, Bergland said. Youth can stay in the overnight shelter for up to 21 days, unless they are under 18 and can get approval from the state to extend their stay. They can stay at 1440 Pine as long as they need to be able to transition into independent housing — so far, 87 youth have received the support.

“As we know, affordable housing affects all age groups and populations,” Bergland said. “We were struggling to find them affordable housing [that] they could obtain on a minimum-wage job.”

The youth at 1440 Pine pay 30% of their income toward rent, undergo financial literacy training and are required to search for long-term permanent housing; they receive services

such as case management, financial assistance, life-skills development, mental health support, and employment and education support.

"It's so exciting to be with them when they get approved for housing and move into their first apartment," said Cidnee Ray, housing program manager for TGTHR. "They have so much hope for their future, and it's amazing to watch them grow."

TGTHR found some youth need to be part of a community and receive support services to be able to access housing — otherwise, they would leave supportive housing and reenter homelessness, Bergland said.

"That's what prompted us to build this next piece of the continuum of care. ... We definitely have seen very good results from it," Bergland said. "We've seen about 50% of the young people living there increase their income, 76% of the youth remain stably housed for at least six months, and 75% exit to another stable housing situation."

The need for the Denver supportive housing project was identified by the Homeless Management Information System that calculated nearly 1,000 unaccompanied youth experienced homelessness in metro Denver last year. The project, 2700 Wewatta, will be located in the River North Art District, or RiNo, and is slated to open in 2024. Just like 1440 Pine, it will serve 18- to 24-year-olds with supportive services.

TGTHR also is working with Larimer County to identify a program and a building, plus sources of funding, to expand its reach, but the details are preliminary, Bergland said.

"While we don't have a physical location outside of Boulder, we are expanding and ... looking at what the community is offering and where the needs are and how we can provide advice on what worked for us and support for getting ... started," Bergland said. "Our program evolved over the decades to meet the needs of the community and the changing times."

To address needs locally, TGTHR is expanding the number of beds at the Source from 14 to 30 and reconfiguring and expanding the overnight shelter and drop-in center.

"We're cosmetically fixing some of the layout, so it's more conducive to our services," Bergland said. "These renovation plans include expanding the space to ensure accessibility for all individuals regardless of their physical abilities and to support trauma-informed service provision. ... We know that all young people staying in a homeless shelter experience some type of trauma, so want to minimize the triggers."

The Source originally opened in 2010 to provide youth aging out of the system with additional support services to navigate basic life skills and to prevent them from entering homelessness.

"By focusing on these core areas of affordable housing, supporting education and employment, improving mental and physical wellbeing, and then fostering permanent

connections, we're making sure they feel like they're part of a community and have a strong support system," Bergland said.

In 2022, TGTHR served nearly 250 youth with more than 13,000 meals, 2,700 case management sessions and 1,000 behavioral health counseling sessions, as well as nearly 500 hours of family coaching for youth and their families.

TGTHR was originally called Attention Homes, but changed its name to TGTHR in 2021 to better reflect its services and to connect with the population it serves, Bergland said. Attention Homes was founded by several community members who saw several youth coming through the court system and ending up in detention centers because there was no other place for them to go, she said.

"Detention centers filled up with minors who didn't need it," Bergland said. "They needed a stable, supportive home environment and attention. That's where the name Attention Homes came about."

In the 1990s, Attention Homes added several group homes to its programming for temporary placement of youth in the state's care until foster or permanent housing could be achieved.

"We still have one model like that original program," Bergland said, referring to Chase House. "Obviously, we changed it a little bit."