

LIVING & ARTS

DECEMBER 3, 2000

SUNDAY CAMERA

SECTION D

COMING ATTRACTIONS

ART

A Fringe benefit

Being an artist is, by necessity, a solitary life. The thinking takes time, and the execution usually takes even longer. So it's not unusual when a group of artists has the idea to band together for a little critical camaraderie and practical sharing of information. **Fringe**, the current name of an informal collective of 10 Denver/Boulder women artists — Patricia Bramsen, Amy Guion Clay, Wendy Clough, Buff Elting, Velvet Brandy LeMae, Sarah McKenzie, Jane Oniki, Dawn Howkinson Siebel, Gail Wagner and Mary Yaeger — has been around for a bit, but hopes its "Winter Show" at the Highlands Office Building, 885 Arapahoe Ave., will help raise its profile in the hearts and minds of the Boulder art crowd. Reception and art sale 1 to 7 p.m. today; sale continues through Jan. 7. Call (303) 494-7772.

— J. Gluckstern

MUSIC

Laughter and celebration

The **Denver Gay Men's Chorus** mixes traditional material with humorous songs and pieces from other cultures at its annual holiday show at 7 tonight at First United Methodist Church, 1421 Spruce St. Tickets are \$15-\$20; call (303) 825-4849.

—Greg Glasgow

ART

As they see themselves



Sophia left, reaches out to touch Galen

lion mask in the toddler room at the Boulder Day Nursery on Spruce and 15th streets. The center is supported by Boulder County United Way.

CARMEL ZUCKER / Daily Camera

Uniting FACTOR

Boulder County United Way draws from community to help those in need

Story by Greg Glasgow ● Camera Staff Writer



JON HATCH / Daily Camera

Melanie Wood, second from left, helps **Wendy Mohr** grate cheese for a breakfast dish at the Center for People with Disabilities. **Vanessa Estrada**, far left, prepares sausage and **Diane Kurlak**, an employee of the center, waits to help out in the back of the room. The group learns independent living skills through daily courses offered by the center, which is funded by United Way.

Calling it a Robin Hood-style organization doesn't paint exactly the right picture of Boulder County United Way, but there is a certain amount of taking from those who have much and giving to those who have little.

Nothing is taken by force, of course — all of United Way's money comes in the form of donations, either from corporations or individuals. The nonprofit organization serves as a sort of master charity, distributing millions of dollars annually to local partner agencies, all committed to health and human services.

This year's fund drive, which kicked off in September, has raised nearly \$2.5 million so far; Executive Director Barbara Pingrey hopes to raise \$3.4 million by the end of the year.

"We not only collect funds, we assess the needs and help (determine) where the needs are greatest," Pingrey says. "We also look at how we can help facilitate volunteer resources for the health and human service agencies. How can we bring programs together when we have the overview? Community-building and collaboration are a big part of what we do."

Grants range from \$2,000 to \$130,000 per agency; to receive funds, agencies undergo an application process that includes a written proposal, a verbal presentation, and a site visit by representatives from United Way's board of 19 volunteers. Agencies submit quarterly financial reports to United Way.

The nearly 80-year-old organization provides money for programs, not operating costs: At Meals on Wheels for instance, United Way contributes to the preparation and delivery of meals, not rent or other administrative costs. United Way helps fund 44 agencies throughout the county, focusing on six areas: youth development, family violence, job readiness, dependent care, sustaining care and crisis care. With a paid staff of nine full-timers and one part-timer, and an army of volunteers, United Way is one of Boulder's most visible charity organizations.

But visibility doesn't guarantee great results: Pingrey points out that Mile High United Way, which serves five Denver-area counties, raised an average of \$6 million per county in 1999. Boulder County raised a little more than half that amount.

"Boulder County is a great place to live," she says. "It's beautiful and the climate is outstanding. We need to have people who live here understand that not everyone can participate in the quality of life that most of us enjoy for many reasons, many of which are out of their control. By sharing the stories of the programs we fund, we raise money for the organization, but hopefully we raise awareness as well."

Following is a look at three of the 44 organizations that benefit from the services of United Way, from one that teaches children to one that feeds seniors.

Boulder Day Nursery

"We're about providing high-quality, affordable, accessible child-care, early-learning programs and family services, mostly to lower-

Please see UNITED on 2D

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United Way draws from community to help those in need

Continued from 1D

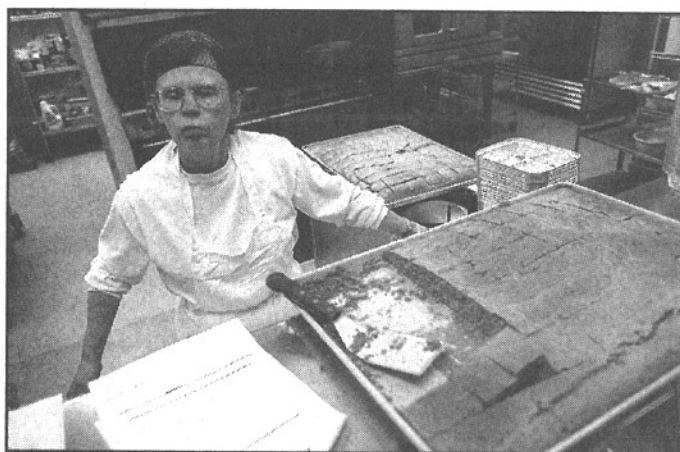
income families," says Steve Callander, executive director of the 83-year-old Boulder Day Nursery. "Maybe it's a single mom, and maybe she's a bank teller, a secretary or working at a grocery store making \$8 or \$9 an hour, and the average cost of child care in Boulder right now is about \$805 a month per child. If you're making \$8 an hour, it's really hard to pay \$700 rent for an apartment and then another \$800 for child-care. Parents right now are paying more for child care than they are for college, and that's a problem for families who are even not so low-income."

The nursery charges parents on a sliding scale, anywhere from \$100 to \$800 per month per child. Callander emphasizes the nursery's dedication to high-quality child care — low student-to-teacher ratios, a settled staff with a low turnover rate, well-trained instructors and a curriculum that focuses on individual strengths and weaknesses.

"There are varied activities all the time — there's a curriculum where kids do different things, as opposed to, 'There's a computer, kid. Go play,'" Callander says.

From their 5,000 square foot building at the corner of 15th and Spruce streets, staffers at Boulder Day Nursery care for 77 children, ranging in age from 6 months to 16 years. The center is open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. weekdays throughout the year. United Way, its primary source of funding, gave the school \$75,000 this year.

"We started a relationship with



CARMEL ZUCKER / Daily Camera

Carolyn Weygandt, food services manager for Meals on Wheels, checks a list of orders to be filled as she dishes up meals for delivery at the Senior Center.

United Way in 1922," Callander says. "They're helping us to provide that high-quality care to families that have been priced out of almost every other center in the area. Without that help from United Way, those families simply wouldn't be able to live in Boulder, period.

"A lot of people out there would say, 'So don't live and work in Boulder. If you can't afford it, go away.' But Boulder has always been a very diverse community, especially socioeconomically, and we feel like there's value to that. That's part of what we're trying to help maintain."

Center for People with Disabilities

The goal of the Center for People with Disabilities, says executive director David Bolin, is to go

out of business. Founded in 1977, the center teaches people of any disability — mental or physical — to live independently, to find jobs and to stay out of nursing homes.

"We teach things like maintaining good relationships, problem-solving and how to be your own advocate, especially with a lot of our folks who have to deal with Medicare and Medicaid," he says. "Our goal is basically to empower people so that they don't need us anymore. So that they understand the resources available to them and can live independently. We try to focus on doing things that will enable us to serve people so they don't need us for years and years."

The organization leads weekly classes in cooking, nutrition, social skills, employment, finances and budgeting, all taught at its head-

quarters on Arapahoe Avenue east of Foothills Parkway. People drop by every weekday just to socialize, or to take advantage of peer support groups. The agency also provides in-home care that prevents institutionalization of people with severe disabilities.

The center receives funding from private donations and various government agencies, including the Department of Education, the state of Colorado, Boulder County and the city of Boulder. One of the program's major funders is the United Way which, Bolin says, provides more money than the state. The organization received \$102,000 from United Way this year.

"United Way money shows that you have community support," he says. "People know that we're on the up-and-up. If they want to give us a straight donation, they know that the United Way is looking at our finances. We're a viable institution, we're not out to rip people off — it gives us a legitimacy."

Meals on Wheels

This year, from the kitchen at the West Boulder Senior Center at Ninth Street and Arapahoe Road, two full-time chefs will prepare 70,000 meals for people who could not otherwise cook for themselves. Some are elderly, some are recovering from surgery, some have cancer, or MS or AIDS. All need to eat.

"We're down to the real nitty-gritty of what counts — food," says Executive Director Francea Phillips. "It doesn't matter what age people are; it doesn't matter

what their income is. We're there for any age group or any income ability. All we need to know is their need."

Using 200 drivers a week, Meals on Wheels delivers hot lunches five days a week to 200 recipients in the city of Boulder (Longmont, Broomfield, Lyons, Lafayette and Louisville have their own Meals on Wheels programs). On Fridays, drivers bring along frozen meals to last through the weekend. The program also offers inexpensive lunches at the Senior Center five days a week for anyone who wants them. Every Tuesday night for the last four years, Meals on Wheels has partnered with another United Way agency, Special Transit, to bring people from their homes to the Senior Center for "Wheels to Meals," a festive night of food and entertainment.

"They dress up, they come to the senior center, they have ribs, steak, prime rib — and for only \$6 per person. That includes transportation," Phillips says. "It's a very fancy evening. It's my strong belief that socialization is very important for people who are isolated."

Food is the top priority at Meals on Wheels, but the organization provides other services as well, checking daily on the well-being of recipients, and providing special treats on special days.

"We deliver birthday cakes and flowers on an individual's birthday, and for many of our clients it's the only acknowledgment they have of their birthday," Phillips says. "For some of these people who don't have any families at all, their only family is us."

Two year ago, Phillips started

East Lake Catering, a company that gives all proceeds to Meals on Wheels. Other money comes from clients, who pay for meals on a sliding scale, anywhere from 25 cents to \$5.50. Phillips says clients pay an average of \$2.85 per meal. An additional 6 percent of the organization's budget comes from United Way, which gave Meals on Wheels \$23,000 this year.

"Our relationship with United Way is excellent," Phillips says. "The marketing and the public relations that they do on our behalf are very helpful. Because we're a member of United Way, we're listed in all their marketing materials, and that helps create exposure for us."

The rest of the Meals on Wheels budget comes from private donations, grants and in-house fundraisers. The holidays are a good time to raise awareness of what the agency does, Phillips says, but the need it addresses is not seasonal in nature.

"We have Brownie troops and Girl Scout troops who make presents and goodies to send to (our clients), so this is a very touching time of year," she says. "The kicker is, we have to do this year-round. It's wonderful for people to think of this need during the holidays, but our request is that people help us do this year-round. People want to eat all year, not just during the holidays."

There are two ways to give to United Way: Donations may be given to the general fund or designated for specific agencies. For more information and a list of partner agencies, call (303) 444-4013 or log on to www.unitedwaybouldercounty.org.