



The  
Joshua  
School

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Thank you





Life at The Joshua School (TJS) is about connections. Students are supported by 1:1 relationships with their teachers and therapists. Families find connections to TJS staff, other families, and resources to help navigate life on the autism spectrum. TJS' goal in fostering these connections is always greater support, independence, more choice, and self-sufficiency for both a student and his/her family.

Connections within our TJS community have shifted over the past year. At the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in March, we transitioned to remote learning. The pandemic also forced cancellation of our spring fundraising gala, *Standing Strong – Transforming Lives*. Eight months into the pandemic, our students have returned to safer models of in-person and hybrid learning. And the TJS community responded generously to an

emergency fundraising campaign that enabled us to cover gala losses.

Needless to say, another theme of the year is flexibility. This is not a new concept at TJS. Through 1:1 relationships, we meet students where they are each day. The purpose of this report is to keep you up to date on our students' progress, and our school's core objectives, which despite these uncertain times, remain unchanged:

#### Establishing a sustainable and effective model

TJS has earned the Colorado Department of Education's (CDE) Model Autism Site award for the last four years in a row by being flexible, providing superior programming, and meeting the individual needs of students. When the pandemic hit, we transformed our educational model from in-person to remote learning in one short week. Every day the same instructor, a familiar person and friend, led each student's daily activities remotely. We also found safe ways to continue some trips into the community with masks, as well as vocational experiences for older students.

#### Ensuring an appropriate physical environment

Our student population is growing, and all three TJS campuses are at capacity. With more physical space, we could serve more students and have a greater impact. Safety protocols and social distancing requirements have also made the need for space even more acute. We continue to search for additional physical space and hope to report progress on this front by the end of 2020.

#### Building and retaining a highly effective staff

During remote learning, and as we have moved back to modified in-person classes, TJS has continued to

recruit and train staff. All staff benefits, paid time off, and professional development opportunities have been maintained at pre-COVID levels. Weekly staff meetings continue via Zoom to support staff and collectively discuss issues that arise.

#### Creating strong governance with organizational oversight

As remote learning needs differed at each of TJS' three campuses, teacher and administrative staff leaders concentrated on solving problems and removing barriers to allow our highly trained staff to do their jobs in a challenging environment. Program directors worked with individual staff members to keep in touch with each student and his/her family. TJS' administrative team kept in close touch with school districts, local health departments and the CDE Office of Facility Schools.

You will read in the following pages about how rates of autism continue to rise in Colorado. Services to support families and children are not keeping pace. The pandemic has also introduced new barriers like funding uncertainty and difficulty in obtaining in-person services. Finally, there is a pressing need in Colorado to broaden support for children and adults from all walks of life who are living with autism and other developmental disabilities.

October 5, 2020 marked the 15th anniversary of TJS' founding. Whether you are a new friend or old, we thank you for your interest and support of our school, especially during the past year. Taking inspiration from our students, we continue to move forward, just in a different way. Thank you for being part of the journey.

#### ED NICHOLS

Executive Director



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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# autism spectrum disorder in colorado

Findings from the Colorado Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (CO-ADDM) Project help us to understand more about the number of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), the characteristics of those children, and the age at which they are first evaluated and diagnosed.

## OF CHILDREN IDENTIFIED WITH ASD...

**48%**  
received a comprehensive developmental evaluation by age 3



**50%**  
received an ASD medical diagnosis by age 4 1/2

# 1 in 76

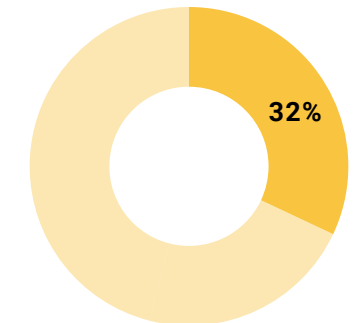
or 1.3% of 8-year old children were identified with ASD by the CO-ADDM Project in 2016

# 4.5x

**BOYS MORE LIKELY** to be identified with ASD **than GIRLS**

## INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IN COLORADO

Colorado had intelligence quotient (IQ) data available for 76% of children identified with ASD. **Of those children, 32% had intellectual disability.**



Intellectual disability is defined as an IQ score of 70 or lower.

Source: ADDM Network Community Report of Autism 2020. A Snapshot of Autism Spectrum Disorder in Colorado. 2020.





# 1

## TRANSITION PROGRAM

### Englewood & Boulder

We've built successful relationships, job opportunities with local businesses, and collaborated with over 40 separate job sites for 30 students who have participated in job coaching and career exploration. Community-based instruction is an aspect of our Transition Program, and students frequent locations including grocery stores, community recreation centers, libraries and museums where important social communication and navigational skills are targeted throughout community environments.

The goal is to provide students with training while attending school, and build skills and confidence that will allow them to obtain paid positions when they graduate. Of equal importance is helping our students to contribute to and participate in the community, and to become self-sufficient adults.



MPACT 2020 THE JOSHUA SCHOOL

# 2

## SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAM

### Englewood & Boulder

The School-Age program serves students age 7 to 18 through a highly individualized classroom model that includes special education teachers, instructional assistants, speech therapists, occupational therapists, and board certified behavior analysts (BCBAs).

This model allows us to address the specific needs of each student, taking into account the wide range of functionality and uneven patterns of development typical of children with autism.

At age 14, we work with families to identify goals that will help students transition to adulthood, and our teaching focuses on the areas of vocational skills in the community, and college and career planning.

THE JOSHUA SCHOOL MPACT 2020



# 3

## JOSHUA EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

### Centennial

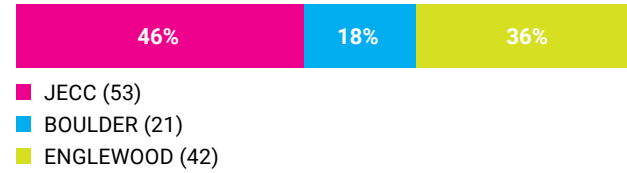
Established in early 2016, the Joshua Early Childhood Center was created from our renowned Early Intervention model to become an all-inclusive setting that serves children between the ages of 2 and 6 years old. Our non-profit center houses two separate programs that, together, form a community emphasizing acceptance, understanding and character.

The Early Childhood Center is an expansion on JEI's original Peer Mentorship Program, established in 2013 to serve typically developing preschoolers using the same educational mission and philosophies. In 2014, JEI was awarded a grant by Autism Speaks Family Service Committee.

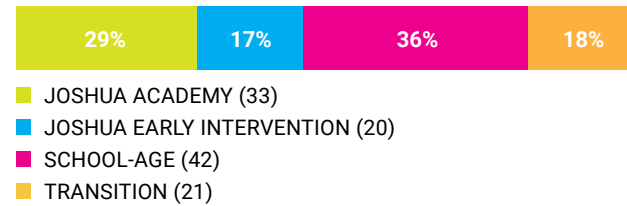
# 2019/2020 *by the* numbers

ACADEMIC SCHOOL YEAR

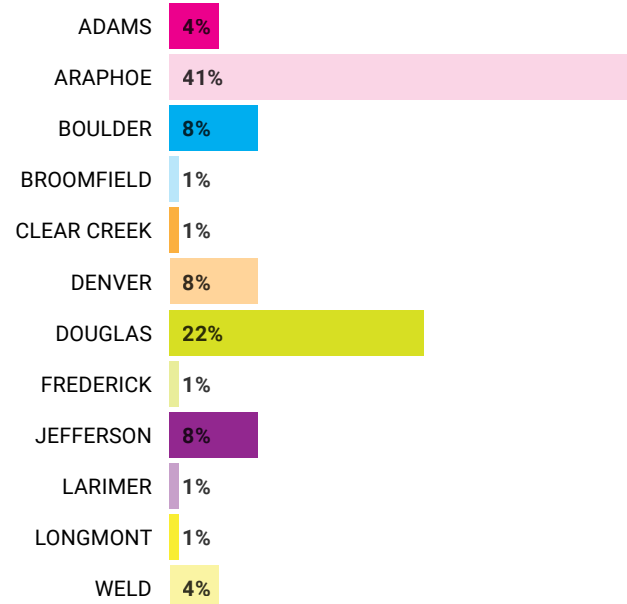
## TJS CAMPUS COMBINED ENROLLMENT (116 STUDENTS)



## COMBINED STUDENT POPULATION (BY PROGRAM)

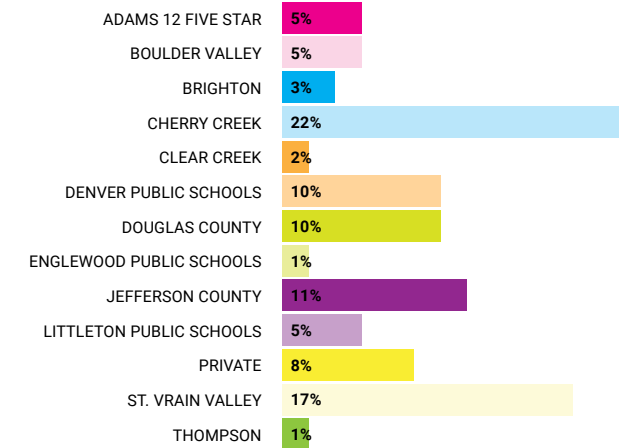


## COMBINED TJS STUDENT POPULATION (BY COUNTY LIVED IN)



## COMBINED SCHOOL-AGE & TRANSITION PROGRAMS (63 STUDENTS) SCHOOL-AGE (6-18 YEARS) | TRANSITION (18-21 YEARS)

### SCHOOL-AGE & TRANSITION (BY SCHOOL DISTRICT REFERRALS)



### SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAM (BY CAMPUS)

TOTAL STUDENTS: 42



### TRANSITION PROGRAM (BY CAMPUS)

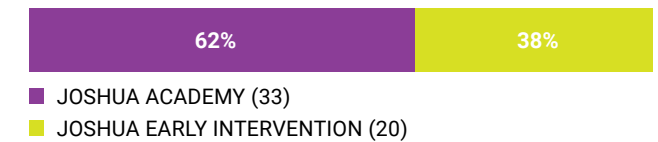
TOTAL STUDENTS: 21



## JECC PROGRAM (53 STUDENTS) AGE (2.5-6 YEARS)

### JECC STUDENT POPULATION (BY PROGRAM)

TOTAL STUDENTS: 53



### JECC STUDENT POPULATION (TRANSITIONED INTO A LESS RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT)

TOTAL STUDENTS: 7







**willie** and his family tried several different learning environments before finding their way to The Joshua School. Diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder at age 3, Willie first enrolled at his local public school. He began to struggle with challenging behavior and it soon became clear to his mom, Victoria, that the public school system was not the right fit. Willie was briefly placed at an interim facility, which was not a good fit either. Finally he arrived at The Joshua School.

During his time at TJS, Willie, his family, and his teachers have all learned that Willie benefits from a structured schedule and teaching methods that include priming him for what will happen next and earning rewards for staying safe during difficult times. Trust is also a critical element. "Being able to trust his teachers is crucial for him," says Victoria. "If he doesn't trust you, he will not have anything to do with you."

Willie is a fun-loving, social student. "His favorite aspects of school are likely to involve adventure, (riding bikes, field trips and recess) and relating to his buddies and teachers," says Lead Teacher, Hilary.

Both Victoria and Hilary agree that the transition to remote learning in spring

2020 was very challenging for Willie. He would often ask when he could come back to school to see his friends. "Willie thrives with a structured day, where he is able to know what is expected of him," points out Hilary. "The reduced structure during COVID remote learning and the inability for Willie to relate in person with his peers, led to less motivation to attend remote groups." Victoria also points out that it was hard for everyone to watch Willie regress in areas where he had made previous gains because he was not rehearsing those skills at school.

Even before COVID, Willie had made great progress at TJS learning to accept and manage challenging events that occur in daily life. The pandemic and remote learning emerged as the next big challenge on this list. Through experimentation, creativity, and collaboration, Willie's teachers and his mom discovered productive learning opportunities that continue to motivate Willie during the pandemic. One of his favorite rewards for attending and participating in remote groups was earning the opportunity to prank a teacher. The prospect of choosing a teacher to take a pie to the face on Zoom, eat a spoonful of hot sauce, or endure a bucket of ice water being dumped on his/her head led to "enthusiastic" participation in groups by Willie and his peers, says Hilary.

Willie also began walking dogs during the spring and summer. He has thrived on the independence he experiences through his dog walking business and loves earning money. What began as a way to stay busy (and safe) during the pandemic has blossomed into a new area of development for Willie, with potential to develop more skills around handling responsibility, customer relationships and money management.

"I am so thankful that my son enjoys going to school every day, and that I no longer get calls about how he has misbehaved," says Victoria. "It feels like now at The Joshua School, there are people who really understand him and are able to meet him where he is."

# shae

is one of the most social students in TJS's transition program!" says Kate Loving, Program Director of Transition. He enjoys getting to know his teachers and friends, meeting new people, having dance parties, and trying new foods.

At age two, Shae was diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder and soon after began an exhausting journey through his local public school system. Beginning in preschool, Shae changed schools virtually every year as teachers and administrators struggled to manage his behavior and meet his needs. The longer he was in the public school system, it seemed the more violent his behavior became," says Shae's mother, Marla. "He would come home from school angry and frustrated, and as a result he would be angry and frustrated with us. It was a cycle that we could not stop."

Shae's parents spent two years meeting with school district officials, trying to convince them that Shae needed to be enrolled at The Joshua School. During the conversations, one administrator stated that he did not believe that Shae had the ability to learn. His family remained persistent and eventually the district moved Shae to TJS. "We were so excited," his mother said. "We knew it would change Shae's life and ours."

Since arriving at TJS, Shae's behavior has improved dramatically. He is able to self-regulate to a greater degree and often chooses a better reaction than violence or destruction. He is able to reason more, think through options, and make different choices. "It has made a world of difference to our family," his mother says. "We don't know where we would be now if it weren't for TJS staff and their expertise. But I think what has been most impactful for Shae is that TJS staff treat him with respect and dignity."

Shae has blossomed academically and socially, too. "I am always surprised when he throws in a big word that I haven't heard him use before," says his mother. "The growth in his vocabulary is definitely due to TJS." Shae has loved interacting with students from Kent Denver School who visited TJS' Englewood campus regularly throughout the school year. Shae also thrived in his vocational experience at Blue Star Recyclers. He has also become a bit of an activist. He protested in March for Our Lives, and sent a letter to Senator Michael Bennet about how to save birds (Bennet actually responded!) "I believe the confidence he has gained from voicing his opinions and meeting new people," Shae's mother adds, "is confidence that was built with the help of TJS and all that they have done to help him develop into an independent young man."

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, Shae was making remarkable progress at school with daily living skills, executive functioning, and cognitive abilities. He was, however, struggling to perform these tasks at home and expressed interest in only completing them at school. "While difficult, remote learning gave Shae the opportunity to generalize these skills at home," says his teacher, and he has risen to the occasion. Shae is currently preparing his own lunch once a week at home, continuing to improve his tolerance and independence for his hygiene routine, and has grown in his ability to express his emotions and self-regulate. "During remote learning, Shae impressed us with his ability and desire to do it all himself," says his mother, "such as checking his emails from teachers, logging into his Zoom meetings, and participating in the live learning sessions and discussions."

TJS has grown with Shae over the years. Whether it is held in-person or remotely, Shae participated regularly in a "Boys Group," at TJS, where he had the opportunity to discuss topics such as girls, having crushes, and dealing with emotions. "The staff have been great in meeting Shae where he is as a growing teenager," his mother says. "He has benefited from talking to his male teachers about personal issues and feelings...and having discussions with them about issues common to a lot of young men."



*Student Highlight*



THE JOSHUA SCHOOL'S

at tale of  
three  
teachers

TRANSITION  
BOULDER

krista  
pruett

Having two younger siblings with autism, I have always had a love for people on the spectrum," says Krista Pruett, Occupational Therapy Assistant at TJS. Krista completed an internship at TJS while she was pursuing her college degree and was "blown away" by the value and care that was put into each student's individual programming. Krista was also intrigued by the practice of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and knew that learning more about ABA would be an asset in her chosen field of occupational therapy (OT). She applied for a job at TJS immediately after graduating from college.

Megan Coatley, Director of Behavioral Programming at the Boulder campus points out that Krista is the living embodiment of two of TJS's core philosophies - 'Be Kind,' and 'Dignity is a Birthright.' "She is one of the kindest people I have ever met," says Megan. "She makes her teammates feel comfortable and supported, which helps us to collaborate and improve

programming for students. And, students LOVE to work with Krista because she meets them exactly where they are, is genuinely excited to engage with them, and brings activities and ideas that are personalized just for them."

During remote learning, TJS staff leaned on Krista to create and lead fun, engaging OT activities over Zoom. Krista delivered. In addition to activities for students, she also gave families ideas about how to implement OT activities at home throughout the day. "Watching Krista engage our students in dancing, singing, physical exercises, and games over Zoom was one of the highlights of remote learning for both families and TJS team members," says Megan.

Krista says it is the students and staff at TJS who keep her going. After four years on staff, she still finds joy and fulfillment in hearing students laugh, and watching them overcome barriers, experience new things, and try their best at new tasks. She is particularly drawn to The Joshua School's emphasis on taking students



off campus into the community. "One of my favorite parts of my job is getting to expose kids to the community," Krista says, "and allowing community members to be exposed to our sweet students. The population served by The Joshua School has so much to offer the community and I love getting to be a part of facilitating this exposure."

Krista also appreciates the community of like-minded coworkers she has found at TJS. "The nature of the type of work we do paired with the positive atmosphere creates a bond amongst staff members that really makes you feel like you are a team," she says. "I have benefited so much personally from being a part of this supportive community!"

# marie lowe

Upon graduating from the University of Minnesota Duluth, Marie had her whole career planned out. Then everything changed when she decided to postpone graduate school and move to Colorado to work as a ski instructor in Vail. Getting involved with a local adaptive skiing nonprofit called Small Champions was a turning point. "From the very first ski lesson I taught, I knew this was an experience that would change my life," she says. "It was absolutely magical and I am incredibly thankful for that opportunity."

After finding her way to Denver and working as a paraprofessional in Denver Public Schools, Marie joined TJS in 2013 as an instructional assistant. "I knew I had an incredible passion for working with kids with disabilities," she says, "I wanted to continue to explore what that could look like outside of skiing." More than seven years later, Marie has some insight into what keeps her at TJS - "Maybe I love working hard," she says. "More likely I'm addicted to hope, happiness, and quality

of life for every individual regardless of their abilities."

Jamie Cohen, Program Director at Joshua Early Intervention, has been impressed with Marie's drive and passion. "Marie leaves her ego at the door," says Cohen, "and is the first to jump into any situation where help is needed. She injects humor into even the toughest situations and brings so much light and energy to our culture."

Marie played a key role in the Joshua Early Childhood Center's (JECC) transition to remote learning and telehealth services during the initial COVID lockdown. Because everyone was under so much stress, Marie had the idea to incorporate the school's philosophy of "start small, move slowly" with introducing remote programming to families. The idea worked and many families who were reticent to participate at first gradually increased their time to daily sessions.

Marie also provided crucial support during COVID to a family whose child had just started at JECC in early December. The child had no form of communication



when Colorado's stay at home order went into effect and she had just started to work on sitting at her desk for 10 seconds. During their telehealth sessions, Marie and the Sunshine Peak team worked with the child's mother in learning how to use the communication app, which ultimately was the child's first form of communication. As a result of the collaboration between Marie, the Sunshine Peak team, and the child's mother, progress continued and the child is now close to mastering her first expressive communication goal.

"The emotional rollercoaster of working at TJS can be difficult," says Marie. "But it is also an amazing part of this experience. I think what ultimately keeps me here are the intangibles—the love and energy you feel from your students, their families, and your co-workers, even in the most challenging of times."

# Lamin Cobb

Lamin Cobb visited TJS long before he would become an employee. His brother, Julian, has autism and attended TJS as a teenager. "I was always impressed by how enthusiastic the staff was when we arrived at school each day," says Lamin, "and I was amazed with the skills that my brother acquired." Lamin first started thinking about a career serving children with ASD and other disabilities after a summer spent volunteering at Adam's Camp when he was 14. "I had such a fantastic experience interacting with so many wonderful people there," he says. "So much so that once I was old enough I began working as a direct service provider for individuals around Colorado and as a family caregiver for my brother." Lamin received his BA in Communication Sciences and Disorders and a few years later "jumped at the opportunity" to come work at TJS as an Instructional Assistant in the Transition Program.

Kate Loving, Lamin's supervisor, sees Lamin living the TJS philosophy that dignity is the birthright of every human being. "I think because he grew up in a diverse family, with a brother with ASD, this is not something he has to think about," Loving says. "It's just part of who he is."

Lamin also has a particular talent for discovering students' unique interests,

talents and dreams. During remote learning, he organized Zoom dance party sessions with one of TJS' transition students who loves to dance with teachers and friends. Loving acknowledges that COVID-19 and remote learning have been challenging for her staff. "Another special thing about Lamin," she says, "is that he has been willing to show his vulnerability during this challenging time." He has spoken up in small group professional development sessions about his own struggles and opportunities so he can better serve students. "It's powerful and motivating for other staff," says Loving. "They feel relieved when Lamin talks about this stuff; they realize they are not alone."

When he first arrived as an employee at TJS, Lamin was happy to discover that the staff's enthusiasm for their students was authentic. "They were genuinely happy and excited to be there," he says. The staff support and continuing education drew him in further. "I have never worked at a place where I have felt so supported," he says. "There is always a specialist available when you need them."

What keeps him at TJS? "It's the philosophy of meeting your students where they are," says Lamin. "This approach to teaching offers students dignity, respect and the right to be human. I now understand how my brother was able to learn so much."





# 2020 **STANDING STRONGER** ...than ever



*Clockwise from top right:*  
**Parent Staff & Community Landscaping Event, Volley4Charity Landscaping Event**  
 August 2020

Life at The Joshua School changed dramatically with the onset of COVID-19. We continue to serve our students and families in this new climate, weathering many challenges and celebrating small victories, too.

From day one, support from our TJS community has been overwhelming. Within just a few days from the start of our Standing Stronger campaign, our community banded together to help raise over \$200,000 for TJS! We want to express our sincere gratitude to each person, family and business who expressed concern and offered assistance. Your support means more than ever. Thank you for helping to give independence and build bright futures for our students.

We ask that you continue to assist TJS in achieving our mission by continuing to support us through our community events and fundraising efforts, as well as sharing our stories on social media with your family and friends.

For an official update, visit [www.joshuaschool.org](http://www.joshuaschool.org).  
 To support our **TJS: Standing Stronger** appeal, follow us on:  
 Facebook: [@joshuaschooldenver](https://www.facebook.com/joshuaschooldenver)  
 Instagram: [@thejoshuaschool](https://www.instagram.com/thejoshuaschool)  
 Twitter: [@thejoshuaschool](https://twitter.com/thejoshuaschool)

#WeAreJoshuaStrong #StandingStronger



*From Left to Right:*  
**Volley4Charity Landscaping Day**  
**Parent Staff & Community Landscaping Day**  
 August 2020

a special thanks to our

**AFFILIATES & PARTNERS**



**2020 GALA SPONSORS**



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**2019 - 2020 VOCATIONAL SITES**

ANYTIME FITNESS - GUNBARREL  
BLUE STAR RECYCLERS  
CHUCK & DON'S PET FOOD & SUPPLIES  
CHERRY CREEK / GREENWOOD VILLAGE  
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER  
MORGRIDGE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

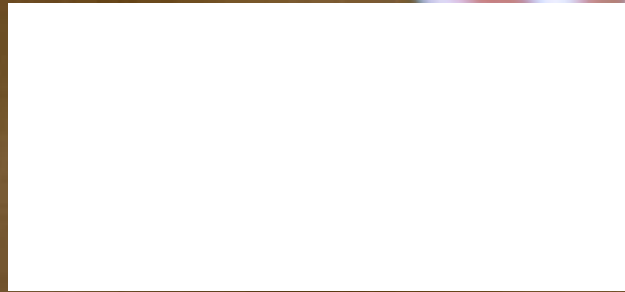
EARTHLINKS COMMUNITY GARDEN  
GARDEN PATCH  
HAMPTON INN - GUNBARREL  
HAPPY DOG RANCH  
KEITH'S COFFEE BAR  
KENT DENVER SCHOOL

LA BELLE ROSETTE COFFEE & WINE BAR  
OUT OF THE BLUE  
PROJECT RISE FITNESS  
RENEE'S GARDEN SEEDS  
SHARE GOOD FOOD  
TEACHING THE AUTISM COMMUNITY TRADES (TACT)



Place  
Stamp  
Here

Mail to



## OUR CAMPUSES

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