

November 5, 2020

It All Starts with Books

Helping Low Income Children and Youth Learn during the Challenges of COVID-19

Amid swirling politics, pandemic and COVID-19 economic impacts, 471 children from low-income families in Boulder are receiving a special delivery—books.

Boulder Housing Partners (BHP) is delivering the books as part of a comprehensive approach to enriched learning opportunities for children in families disproportionality impacted by the economic, health and learning disruptions from COVID-19. Other programs include after-school Dreamer Scholar programming, wireless access, and health/wellness activities.

“We know that this is a hard time for many families in our communities who are not only experiencing financial hardships from COVID-19, but are also trying to care for kids, be a teacher at home, and work.” said Amanda Maya Dickson, BHP resident services program manager. “We’re trying to ensure that all kids, from preschool to high school, have access to learning opportunities during an incredibly difficult time.”

BHP staff work directly with parents on a wide range of support services and strive to keep children healthy and focused on learning. Current programs include:

Book Rich Environments

A partnership with Boulder Public Library and the National Book Foundation, the [Book Rich Environments](#) (BRE) program connects families with free books, programming and vital resources offered by public libraries. More than 3,000 age-appropriate books are being delivered to 471 children ages 3 to 18 in nine communities this month.

Mayra Zavala, a BHP parent and past BRE participant shared, “It’s better when we have access to hands-on material like books and activities to do with the whole family. There is a lot of stress with technology and people are nervous to go to public places like the library, so receiving books and activities at our door is much better and safer. “

Virtual After-School Dreamer Scholar Programming

In addition, BHP is partnering with the “[I Have a Dream](#)” [Foundation of Boulder County](#) (IHDF) to continue virtual after-school Dreamer Scholar programming for 130 students living at 8 Boulder Housing Partners communities. BHP and IHDF are also preparing to organize small-group learning pods, when safe to do so following COVID-19 safety protocols. The smaller groups will provide a critical in-person learning experience, social connections and mentors for the students. The resident services team also provides parents with referrals to additional supports if in need, such as low or no-cost food access and school supplies.

The IHDF Dreamer Scholar model that these children are enrolled in provides one-on-one attention and daily programming that has proven to narrow the opportunity gap. Dreamer Scholars graduate from high school, enroll in post-secondary programming, and complete their post-secondary education at much higher rates than their low-income peers. In 2020, the high school graduation rate for youth from nine BHP communities was 96 percent.

Wireless Access

BHP is upgrading or installing free wi-fi service for 15 of its communities, so that residents and some 530 students can access on-line classes and other resources from their homes. Online access is even more essential now, during the pandemic, to help residents stay connected to school, work, telehealth, family members, and friends.

Health & Wellness

Fifty children from BHP communities ages 6-18 are participating in the [Boulder Parks and Recreation Youth Services Initiative](#) (YSI), to support their health and resiliency. Through a blend of virtual and

socially-distant outdoor activities, this program introduces youth to art, recreation, nutrition, the benefits of academic achievement, a healthy culture, and support system.

About Boulder Housing Partners

Boulder Housing Partners strives to make living in Boulder welcoming and affordable for people from a diverse range of backgrounds, regardless of income. The housing authority for the City of Boulder for over 50 years, BHP builds, owns, and manages quality affordable homes for low and moderate-income residents, while fostering thriving and sustainable Boulder communities.

BHP is one of a select group of public housing authorities in the United States participating in the prestigious Moving to Work program, which encourages innovation by providing flexibility in the use of federal funds. Its communities have won national and international awards for sustainability and affordable housing development. For additional information on BHP, please visit www.boulderhousing.org