

U p L i f t

PAGE 3 Poverty Pervades in Denver

PAGE 4 Soft Skills, Hard Facts

**Leaders
Reach High**

PAGE 5

PAGE 6 College Apps on the Rise

**Neighborhood
"Lift"**

PAGE 7

PAGE 8-11 Feature Articles

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Contents

- 3... Poverty Pervades in Denver
 4..... Soft Skills, Hard Facts
 5..... Leaders Reach High
 6..... College Apps on the Rise
 7..... Neighborhood "Lift"
 8-11..... Feature Articles

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About Colorado UpLift

Colorado UpLift is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization in Denver, Colorado, dedicated to building long-term, life-changing relationships with urban youth.

Established in 1982, Colorado UpLift utilizes full- and part-time teacher/mentors to provide four interdependent program areas to at-risk kids:

- In School
- After School
- Adventure
- Post Secondary

Comments, questions or article submissions may be sent to the Colorado UpLift office.

On the cover

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Letter from the President

Dear Friends:

First, thank you for partnering with us to build long-term, life-changing relationships with urban youth!

For the 2009-2010 school year, we are teaching in over 120 classrooms in 19 Denver Public Schools. We are continually encouraged by our results, which reflect UpLift is truly making a difference in the lives of our kids, in our urban community and in the state of Colorado as a whole.

However, poverty continues to be a key indicator of risk for youth. In this issue (pg. 3), we want to share some of the recent statistics on how much poverty impacts the education of students in our state. As recently noted by the Colorado Children's Campaign, over 356,000 of the state's 1.2 million children live in poverty, score below proficiency levels on the CSAP or ACT College Readiness Indicator, and/or have dropped out of the education system before graduating from high school. Those numbers are significant.

From Alliance for Excellent Education (2009), we know that two-thirds of new jobs require more than a high school diploma, either in the form of higher education or advanced training, making instruction at the high school level a crucial stepping stone to economic security – both on a personal level and for our nation.

Poverty is where the risk begins for many of our UpLift students. The Colorado UpLift program seeks to break the generational cycle of poverty -- by ensuring students attain at least a high school education and are equipped to be self-sufficient leaders in their communities.

Our vision is to see cities transformed by these new generations of urban leaders, and we thank you for helping us see that vision come alive. We look forward to helping more students achieve their dreams and, ultimately, lead productive lives.

Very truly yours,

Michael G. Painter
 President and CEO

Feature Article

An alarming article in the Denver Post recently stated that there is a drastic increase of children living in poverty, 73 percent more in 2006 than 2000 (www.denverpost.com/newsheadlines/ci_13586917). According to the Colorado Children's Campaign, this is the nations' highest rate of growth.

Specifically, according to the Piton Foundation, a 2006 sample of Denver's vulnerable children (newborn to age eight) totaled 48% of the entire sample of children in Denver, mostly concentrated in west Denver and far northeast Denver http://www.piton.org/Documents/School%20Readiness_webv.pdf.

Thankfully, these highly-concentrated areas are served by Colorado UpLift. At the same time, an increase of impoverished students only increases the amount of risk our youth face. As noted by former Denver Public School superintendent Dr. Jerry Wartgow, poverty is the most highly correlated factor associated with risk, when compared to a variety of other negative influences (e.g. gangs, drugs, or single parenthood).

Test results from UpLift schools in 2008 confirm this statement. CSAP reading tests for 5th graders showed huge disparities in learning based on poverty; 35% of kids on reduced lunch were rated as proficient compared to 67% of non-reduced-lunch students. A 10th grade math sample shows similar results; only 6% of kids on reduced lunch were proficient compared to 25% of non-reduced lunch kids, more than half (SAR Reports, www.dpsk12.org).

With more students at risk, more are youth in danger of dropping out of school, making poor choices and becoming victims of circumstance vs. rising above circumstances. And the need for high school matriculation is crucial; the Alliance for Education (2009) reports that two-thirds of new jobs require even more than a diploma.

Colorado UpLift will continue its efforts to implement its relational strategy to the youth who need it the most; those who attend schools with a large number of students on the free and reduced lunch program (a sign of poverty) and are of minority status (currently 80% of UpLift youth).

Poverty Pervades In Denver

In School

Teaching character, leadership and life skills for success.

In select Denver Public Schools, elementary through middle-school students take the UpLift elective class once per week. High school students attend this elective class five days per week.

Soft Skills, Hard Facts

DO THESE SOFT SKILLS HAVE THEIR PLACE IN THE CLASSROOM? ACCORDING TO CURRENT RESEARCH, THE ANSWER IS A RESOUNDING "YES!"!



The thirteen character qualities and life skills curriculum Colorado UpLift teaches in Denver Public Schools are considered "soft skills" in the business world, otherwise known as personal qualities, habits or attitudes that improve a person's emotional intelligence.

Do these soft skills have their place in the classroom? According to current research, the answer is a resounding "Yes!"!

Specific Skills

The editor of CareerBuilder.com, Kate Lorenz, lists ten common soft skills that employers seek for potential employees, which are similar or the same to the UpLift qualities/skills as listed here:

- Career Mindedness
- Communication
- Caring
- Vision
- Decision Making
- Problem Solving
- Goal Setting
- Courage
- Respect
- Positive Work Ethic
- Integrity
- Responsibility
- Leadership

Job Preparedness

A recent article in the Denver Business Journal cites a study in which the level of emotional intelligence was the difference between an average worker and a top performer (date, 2009). Carol Nicolaides, president of the Progressive Leadership coaching program, states that "In today's working environment, where customers and employees are demanding more, instilling the use of soft skills in your team members is something you simply can't survive without." (*Focus on Soft Skills: A Leadership Wake-Up Call, 2002*).

These findings help validate the crucial need for the UpLift program in urban schools, where students gain valuable lessons they can use in their daily lives – at work, at home, and play.

Though leadership is formally one of the character qualities and life skills taught in the In School portion of Colorado UpLift, it is also the focus of a Monday class taught as part of UpLift's After School program.

Officially called Advanced Leadership Training, this class is held for high school students who desire to take their leadership skills to the next level. The class for high school juniors and seniors who have demonstrated leadership or are Certified Lift Leaders in their UpLift class. Normally around 40 students voluntarily enroll each year.

Service Learning

Advanced Leadership Training provides a variety of leadership training techniques, such as guest speakers, group projects and an all-class service learning project. In the past few years, students have travelled to Tijuana, Mexico, with UpLift Board members and staff to build houses for impoverished families. In 2009, the students flew to Orlando, Florida, to assist their high school counterparts at Elevate Orlando, UpLift's first model replication organization.

Need for Leadership

The culture of most urban, inner cities often reflects a dismal lack of leadership. Victim mentalities and lack of responsibility often come with a culture of poverty. As the principal of Trevista K-8 school, Dr. Veronica Benavides stated, "Some urban students come with an 'I don't care' attitude. It is our job to turn this attitude around so they care for themselves, their peers, their families and their community."

Started in 2001, the Advanced Leadership Training course has **served 252 students since its inception.** With UpLift's vision of a city transformed by new generations of leaders, the course is one way to empower our youth to make a positive difference in their communities.

After School

Mentoring for life change.

Staff members spend up to 80% of UpLift time mentoring students outside of the classroom through after-school activities and events.



Leaders Reach High

ADVANCED LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROVIDES A VARIETY OF LEADERSHIP TRAINING TECHNIQUES, SUCH AS GUEST SPEAKERS, GROUP PROJECTS AND AN ALL-CLASS SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT.

Post Secondary

Personal advancement through higher education.

Students are taught the value of college, instructed in the admissions process and given UpLift information necessary to pursue their dreams.

Good news: Educational trends indicate college attendance and college aspirations are on the rise for students of all income levels and ethnic groups (Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2007*).

However, deadlines, lengthy applications, essay writing and financial requirements are enough to scare off even the most determined applicant, especially urban students who are unfamiliar with the process. Colorado UpLift's Post Secondary program area is focused on providing training and assistance in college applications, as well as stimulating post-secondary aspirations in kids. The results, so far, have been impressive.

Reaching Further

According to data gathered from 2009 UpLift seniors, **86%** applied to attend a post-secondary institution, and **60 to 75%** of those graduates were accepted. Data is currently being gathered to find out how many of those applicants actually enrolled. According to a report by the Piton Foundation, "...just 56% of graduates enroll in college...The findings are even more dismal for low income students, who make up the majority of DPS' students. Only 45% of low-income students who graduate go on to college." UpLift's challenge is to increase those numbers significantly.

Multifaceted Approach

One feather in UpLift's cap is the variety of ways UpLift prepares students for college. Programs with comprehensive approaches (as opposed to just providing one specific type of service, such as test preparation) have the largest impact on college access for minority youth in low-income neighborhoods (ERIC Digest #159: *Characteristics of Effective Urban College Preparation Programs*, Oesterreich, 2000). UpLift's Post Secondary program offers monthly informative seminars, two all-school preparation workshops, college visits and one-on-one coaching to older students. With this approach, students can see their future school plans realized. As one UpLift high school student stated, "*The only thing holding me back, is me.*"

College Apps on the Rise

"I WILL BE THE FIRST IN MY FAMILY TO GRADUATE FROM COLLEGE, AND I WANT TO WORK FOR COLORADO UPLIFT."
-UpLift Student, 2009



Service learning has become more than a "good idea" in many high schools in Denver and around the nation. Currently, suburban schools such as Kent Denver and the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program require students to complete a certain number of community service hours in order to graduate.

Colorado UpLift provides this component for Denver Public Schools through its development of student Lift Leaders, leadership projects and service learning trips. The Adventure component of UpLift – promoting "growth through challenge" - recently engaged students in community service projects around the UpLift office.

Community Service

UpLift led a Summer Advanced Leadership Training program (SALT) for high schoolers, aimed at developing their awareness of community and global issues. As an action point, the students took surveys to homes around the UpLift office to offer their services for yard cleanup or other needs.

Around 15 students pulled weeds, raked and cleaned yards of five houses, but it turns out the need was greater than they thought. One owner was a single mother of five; one individual has just faced five family deaths; one had a son who was hit by a car, and one man's wife just had a leg amputated. The students really learned how a small act of service could go a long way!

Benefits of Service

According to a longitudinal study by the National Youth Leadership Council, youths taking part in service-learning within a community-based organization reported higher numbers of adults they could go to if they were in trouble or needed help (7.2 adults) compared to youths who participated in service-learning within a school (5.8 adults).

It also seems as if youths participating in service-learning in community organizations were held to higher standards by the adult leaders; 73 percent report that adult leaders in organizations set high expectations compared to 69 percent of school-based service-learning participants. Those participating in service-learning in an organization were also more likely to design or plan their service project (57 percent vs. 51 percent). (*Growing to Greatness, 2006, www.nylc.org*)

Neighborhood "Lift"

Adventure

Growth through challenge.

UpLift students participate in year-round, outdoor activities that develop leadership and teamwork.

Jim Baller Retires

JIM BALLER HAS SERVED AS THE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER FOR THE ORGANIZATION FOR 23 YEARS.



Feature Article

Nobody likes a quitter, but at age 67, COO Jim Baller will be taking a long-deserved retirement from Colorado UpLift at the end of 2009.

Jim Baller has served as the Chief Operating Officer for the organization for 23 years. He leaves with the affection and respect of the entire UpLift organization, a host of school administrators and Board members and thousands of urban youth that have come through UpLift's doors.

Journey to Colorado

In 1985, Jim and his wife, Jan, learned about what UpLift was doing in Denver's inner city and left their life in Iowa to join the UpLift staff. At the time, Jim was running a successful insurance business, but also had been a high school teacher and an accomplished student athlete. He saw the vision of what UpLift was stirring in youth, and felt called to join in.

Growth

Upon Jim's arrival, there were three employees and a caseload of around 100 students in the organization. With the help of Jim's financial and administrative skills, the program grew, adding additional schools and students as well as supporting Board members and community partnerships. Colorado UpLift now serves 19 Denver Public Schools with over 3,000 students and 100+ classrooms taught each week.

In his retirement, Jim will enjoy spending time volunteering and spending time with his family, which includes three married sons and 100 grandchildren. He will be greatly missed!

UpLift's current program director, David Dye, will assume Jim's position as COO in 2010.

Feature Article

Everything must start with a solid foundation. While Colorado Uplift was building solid foundations in lives of students, Sheffield Homes was pouring the cement for the Inspiration House, taking advantage of an opportunity to support UpLift's mission and program.

Nuts and Bolts

Greg Ressler (an UpLift board member) and his partners from Sheffield Homes participated in the 2006 Inspiration House, a fundraising effort for the Home Builders Foundation (HBF), the philanthropic arm of the Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Denver. The skilled craftsmen at Sheffield Homes built the home in conjunction with suppliers and subcontractors who donated labor and materials.

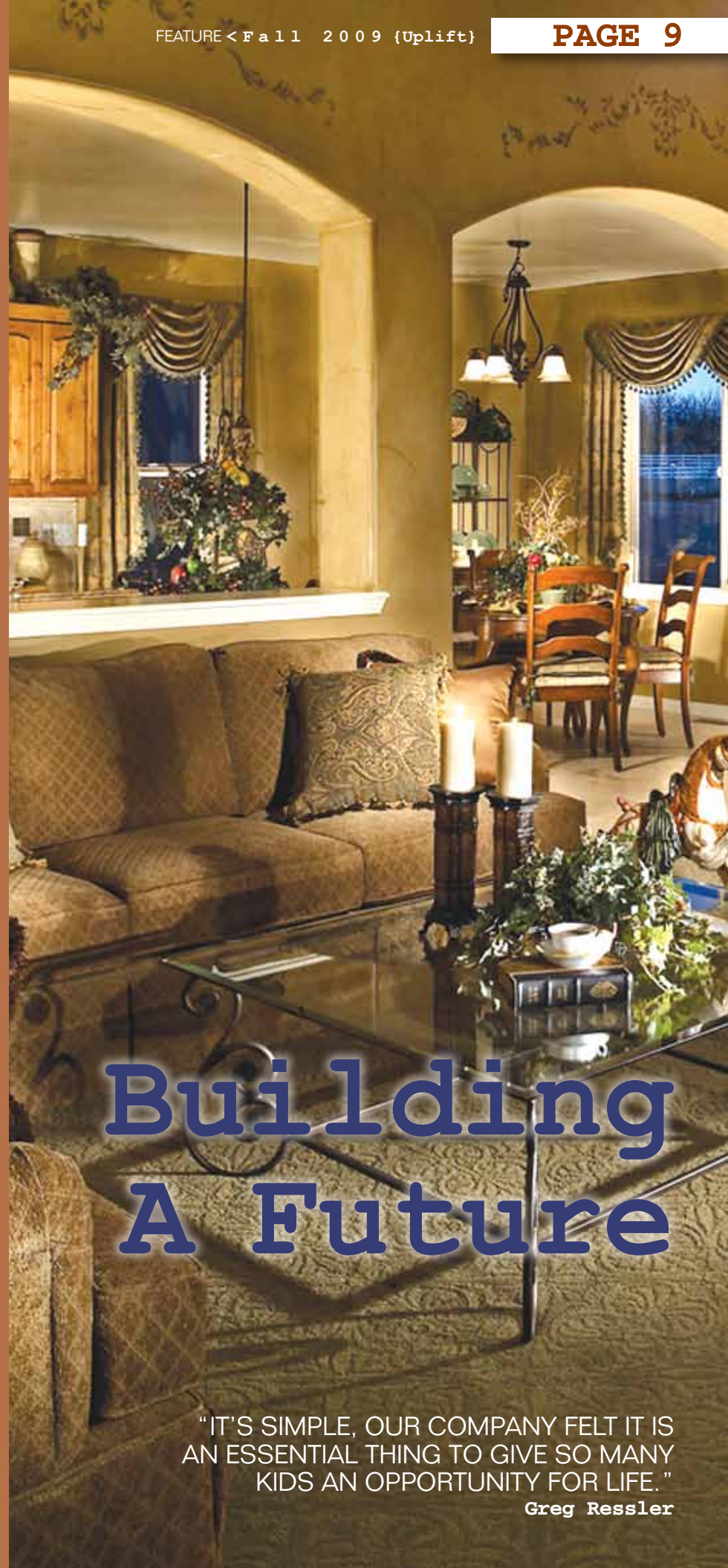
Typically, the proceeds from past home sales of this sort have gone to HBF, but - for the first time ever - the proceeds were split, and UpLift received one-third of the \$399,000 sale revenue.

An Opportunity for Life

Ressler and his partners are passionate about UpLift's purpose, and felt it important to contribute. Ressler stated, "UpLift needs our time and attention; it costs a lot to achieve UpLift's tremendous success."

The house, located in The Villas at Country Estates in North Broomfield, was for sale for two years before the current market forced them to reduce the price to make the final sale in 2009. However the impact of Sheffield Homes, generosity has an immeasurable impact on Colorado UpLift, who can leverage these dollars towards reaching more students with the program.

When Ressler was asked what motivated him and his company to donate he responded, "It's simple, our company felt it is an essential thing to give so many kids an opportunity for life."



Building A Future

"IT'S SIMPLE, OUR COMPANY FELT IT IS AN ESSENTIAL THING TO GIVE SO MANY KIDS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LIFE."

Greg Ressler

Feature Article

The positive effects of academic tutoring for children and youth are well documented, but most students don't take advantage of tutoring opportunities, especially after school. One study shows that only 7% of K-12 students participate in academic after school activities (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, NCES 2007-064).

A joint venture between Colorado UpLift and one of its schools, the Denver School of Science and Technology (DSST), is working to help provide tutoring for more students and use the UpLift leadership model to accomplish it.

Grade "Lift"

Every Wednesday, high school students in the UpLift class at DSST volunteer to help tutor middle-school students assigned by the school. Aptly titled "Grade Lift", the students meet in their UpLift classroom at DSST and work on assignments in groups of three or four, with one tutor per 2-3 youth. "The high school students really make it happen," shared Kwame Rodgers, the UpLift staff leading the project. "They are taking advantage of the leadership qualities they are learning in class."

Students Helping Students

Research also shows that tutoring has a positive effect on the student tutors as well as their younger tutees (Cohen, Kulik and Kulik: Educational Outcomes of Tutoring: A Meta-analysis of Findings, American Educational Research Journal, 1982). "I helped last year", said high school sophomore Trenecy. "I heard the teacher thank us for what we were doing, and it felt good."

Another student, Jade, also a sophomore, felt similarly. "I like helping kids with anything they need," she said. "I like being a leader."

Overall, around 20 middle-school youth attend Grade Lift with seven UpLift tutors each week.

Tutors Lead the Way

"THEY ARE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE LEADERSHIP QUALITIES THEY ARE LEARNING IN CLASS."

Kwame Rodgers



Board Spotlight: Dan Caruso



Feature Article

Colorado UpLift is honored to have Dan Caruso serve on its board of directors. Dan was recently named the 2009 Entrepreneur of the Year for his success in the telecommunications industry, specifically with his three-year-old company Zayo Group (boasting top industry profits and a 400+ employees) as well as Envysion, a Boulder-based company that is also thriving.

"With the onset of iPhones and other electronic devices, there was a need for bandwidth to grow dramatically," Dan shared, humbly.

But Dan's passions have gone beyond the workplace and extended into supporting the urban youth of Colorado UpLift. "About six years ago when I left Level 3 Communications, a personal objective was to get involved in a charity that reached at-risk kids. So I asked around about local charities and through Eric Kramer and Steve James [UpLift supporters] was introduced to Colorado UpLift."

He hasn't turned back since. Not only has Dan invested dollars in UpLift, but has personally participated in UpLift career fairs and took his son on one of UpLift's house-building projects in Tijuana, Mexico, with the Advanced Leadership Training students. He also helps a classroom of students purchase school supplies and winter coats three times a year.

"Both timewise and financially, I've been very pleased with watching the progress UpLift has made over the years, as well as watching the students work their way through the program. It's been very rewarding to see that process."

Dan also shared that he chose to be part of UpLift because it has local impact on the community with kids he could meet, see and observe, as well as the fact that the UpLift staff were directly involved in the lives of the students.

"Colorado UpLift has a long track record of impacting the lives of the kids who need support, and for anyone who is looking to give back to the community, I would highly recommend spending some time getting to know UpLift. It would be a great opportunity for them to give back."



Colorado UpLift

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