

Unforseen Twists and Turns: Nicola's Story

For Nicola Zak, a Colorado native from Littleton, very little about her current situation even remotely resembles the life she had envisioned for herself growing up.

Nicola is known as a kind and considerate presence around St. Francis

Center's day center, where she has been for coming the past sevmonths. eral For Nicola. St. Francis Center offers her both access essential resources. especially a consistent place to receive her mail, as well as a safe space to simply rest and reflect. She likes to get to know other guests and staff at the day

center, and was the invited speaker at St. Francis Center's annual gala in October. Nicola also enjoys spending time with her twelve-year-old son and works as a housekeeper.

While she is making the most of her

current situation, experiencing homelessness was not something Nicola ever thought would happen to her.

Nicola got married at a young age, but divorced her husband after nine years when his drinking became problematic. In the time after the divorce, she

> had steady employment, and gave birth to her son, Kadin. She and Kadin lived in a home with the assistance of a Section 8 voucher for several years, but Nicola felt that she was stable enough pay rent on her own, so gave voucher her up - therewere others who needed it more badly. Not long after,

Nicola was the victim of a life-altering change that took away the stability she had worked so hard to achieve.

In 2014, while she was home in her apartment, a stranger broke in, stole many of her belongings, and physically

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assaulted her, hitting her hard over the head. While Nicola was experiencing intense emotional trauma, she was also enduring severe headaches, and started to wonder if something more serious was wrong. She learned of the full extent of her injuries days later when doctors discovered that the attacker had broken her neck-what is more, the severity of the fracture meant that it was a miracle that she was still able to walk and talk. An injury of this magnitude should have left her paralyzed from the neck down. While things could have been much worse, Nicola was still dealing with migraines and what she describes as a "personality change."

While Nicola was fortunate to have family members she could turn to for help, the attack took away much of what she had considered her status quo in the past—her sense of security, stability, and hope for the future.

Still dealing with a brain injury that left her feeling like a different and often more anxious person, Nicola eventually stopped living with family, hoping to once again be self-sufficient. Ultimately, she became homeless in March, 2016. After bouncing from

Thoughts from Tom



The old adage, "The more things change, the more they stay the same," is ringing true at St. Francis Center these days.

The biggest change upon us is the opening of Saint Francis Apartments at Cathedral Square. This apartment building will provide residents a starting place for their personal transformation, offering each of them a new lease on life. Now that we're in the project's "home" stretch, I would like to extend my gratitude to everyone who has worked so diligently to make the dream of more housing for our guests a reality.

Another recent change for St. Francis Center is our commitment to carry on the legacy of Denver Urban Matters (DenUM), a neighboring non-profit, that recently closed. I hope you

will read about the closure of DenUM on page 4, as well as the new program we are offering, Urban Education, on page 5.

Even amidst these changes, perhaps because of them, I found myself reflecting recently on the constancy that St. Francis Center offers, as well. We have been a pillar in the community for more than 34 years, and I am immensely proud of our daily impact on the community. I am thrilled that now, almost nine years after we opened Cornerstone Residences, our first apartment building, 75% of the original residents are still thriving in their homes. I am delighted that our Outreach Team has already exceeded their annual goals for moving people off the streets into housing. And I am inspired each day by people like Nicola, whose story on page 1 is so powerful, and speaks to the vitality of the work we do here.

Thank you for standing with us through both the familiar and the new.

Tom Luches
Executive Director

Continued from pg 1

shelter to shelter, and wandering the streets during the day, she found the St. Francis Center, and came here as what she described as a last-ditch effort to find a place where she felt comfortable. She first arrived on an afternoon when the Catholic Worker Soup Kitchen was serving a meal, and soon found that she appreciated the standard to which St. Francis Center guests are held.

Since then, she has been coming to St. Francis Center most days, making use of the various resources offered. "Letting my mail come here is a big deal," she says. "I got on food stamps, and I'm also on AND," she explains, referencing Denver's cash assistance program Aid to the Needy and Disabled. Nicola also takes time to describe the feeling of self-confidence that resources offered by St. Francis Center helped her regain or even find: "When you're just sitting on the street, you don't have any selfconfidence," she explains, "those little things like when you go and get your groceries-where are you going to sit and eat your food? Without that help vou don't have self-confidence."

Nicola's brain injury is still part of her daily life. She continues to experience migraines and paranoia, and these things affect many of the decisions she makes. But she is now part of a migraine study at the Anschutz Medical Campus, and hopes that her case might help others in the future.

Though it is difficult for her to imagine what life might be like one year

from now, she calls the present a "transitional phase." Her five-year outlook includes getting housing as well as starting school to become a beautician, a goal that she has had for years.

The things that make Nicola miraculous extend beyond her injury. After a trauma more horrible than most will experience, her resilience is inspiring. Her commitment to finding available resources as well as her openness to forming friendships with other guests

Nicola and her son Kadin



and staff at St. Francis Center are examples of her motivation and kindness. "There is a higher purpose and plan that God has put in place for me," she says, and though the comment is in the context of her survival of the attack, it brings to mind the light she has brought to the lives of the people around her, including those in the St. Francis Center community. "St. Francis Center has given me hope," she says. "There's hope for the future again." But in more ways than one, it is Nicola who is giving hope to the rest of us.

GOVERNOR VISITS SAINT FRANCIS APARTMENTS AT CATHEDRAL SQUARE

SFC News

Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper, Lieutenant Governor Donna Lynne, Reps. Jackson and Weissman and others gathered for a press conference on the top floor of the soon-to-be-completed Saint Francis Apartments at Cathedral Square (SFACS) on September 26. The topic of conversation that day centered on Colorado's legislative funding decision to use tax revenue from the sale of marijuana to fund housing projects around the state, including financial support for SFACS.

Governor Hickenlooper lauded the efforts of St. Francis Center to help people transition out of homelessness, both through SFACS, as well as the organization's on-go-

ing efforts. "[SFACS will work with] the chronically homeless, people who've had real challenges in their life and need the supportive services that this facility is going to provide and that the St. Francis Center is famous for," said the Governor.

SFC Executive Director Tom Luehrs and Saint John's Cathedral Dean Richard Lawson (pictured above with Governor Hickenlooper) also spoke to reporters.



Colorado Gives Day - December 5th

St. Francis Center is again excited to participate in Colorado Gives Day scheduled for Tuesday, December 5th. Colorado Gives Day is an annual statewide movement to celebrate and increase philanthropy in Colorado through online giving. Donations are accepted online through **ColoradoGives.org** and fees are paid for by the Community First Foundation and partners including 1stBank. The \$1 Million incentive fund is one of the largest giving-day incentive funds in the country. If you like to mark-off items from your "to-do list," donations can be scheduled in advance for December 5th. Go online today!

For Giving Made Easy, Donate Online!

Visit St. Francis Center's page on **ColoradoGives.org**, a year-round online giving website that features more than 2,000 Colorado charities. Learn about our programs, how we are helping our community, and donate online to us. Tell your friends and family -no more stamps, no more envelopes - simply donate online. Go to **ColoradoGives.org** and enter St. Francis Center in the search field. From all of us at St. Francis Center, thank you for your support!



SFC News

Denver Urban Matters Closes Doors

By Danielle Krolewicz Denver VOICE - October 2017 reprinted in part with permission

August 31 was the last day for services at non-profit Denver Urban Matters. After 34 years of serving the Denver community, DenUM, which was primarily a food bank, closed its doors. Founded in 1984, the non-profit moved into its most recent home at 1717 E. Colfax Ave. in 1997 and has served the Colfax corridor neighborhood ever since.

"Non-profits close more often than people think," said Tom Leuhrs, executive director of the St. Francis Center. SFC is assuming all of DenUM's assets. "Over the past year and a half there have been a number of food banks in particular that have closed down because of lack of funding."

DenUM employed six people in addition to executive director Tammy Mulligan.

"We are disappointed that it kind of had to go this way," said Mulligan. "Ultimately we're glad that St. Francis Center will use the building for permanent housing—that's the most needed service in the city right now."

The now-vacant building will remain so for the foreseeable future. The intention is for it to be renovated into affordable housing units; the second option is for the building to be sold, with the profit going towards purchasing a new building for the same purpose.

"The housing is a little bit more time intense, so we are working on that now and hope to have something within a year's time," explained Leuhrs. "It takes a lot to get the financing in place, and we are at the beginning of that step." Either way, the legacy of DenUM will be to continue supporting the impoverished community of Denver with affordable housing, it's just a matter of where and when.

Aurora Interfaith Community Services has assumed the food donations DenUM was receiving.

"We wanted our food to go to an organization that has a growing population,

SAINT FRANCIS CENTER TO CONTINUE DENUM'S LEGACY

which Aurora definitely does, that has a need for it. [AICS doesn't] have a big warehouse full of food like some other pantries do, and they're not a big fancy organization," explained Mulligan. Like DenUM, AICS is right off of Colfax but further east, between Quebec and Peoria.

While the food pantry is closed and will not re-open, two other signature programs of DenUM—the Employment Service center and the Urban Education program—have already been taken over by SFC. Employment services were merged with SFC's already existing employment department, and the programming around Urban Education is now being run by SFC staff.

"Their Urban Education program was strong and nationally recognized," said Leuhrs. "[The program] is bringing people a lot of people from out of state and local people to downtown Denver, and it's educating them about what urban life is like—particularly from the perspective of people that are in poverty or close to poverty."

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: ACUPUNCTURE

Since May of 2013, ear acupuncture has been a regular service offered at St. Francis Center through the Wellness Office. Three licensed acupuncturists, including program founder MK Christian, come to the day center three days each week to give acupuncture free of charge for any interested guests, as they have done for the past four years.

The physical process of ear acupuncture involves five tiny needles inserted into different points on the ear just beneath the skin which are then left in place for 30 minutes. Relaxation is one of the primary focuses of ear acupuncture, and guests are encouraged to rest and relax while the needles are in, helped by the dim lighting and soft mu-

sic in the room during the treatment. But ear acupuncture can also have benefits beyond relaxation. The acupuncturists' practice is in step with the protocol of the National Acupuncture Detoxification Associa-

tion, meaning that the detox element of the treatment is also a major focus. Beyond relaxation, decreased cravings and improved withdrawal symptoms have been shown to be effects. While each person experiences acupuncture



Tammy Clarke (left),
Director of Wellness and
MK Christian (right),
acupuncture program founder

differently, the fact that there are several guests who show up to acupuncture regularly at St. Francis Center demonstrates the benefit many gain from it.

The program has seen up to 12 people on a single weekday, and anyone is welcome to drop in. This is an excellent example of a service offered at St. Francis Center that through consistency and commitment is making a real impact for SFC's guests.

Welcome to the newest members of Saint Francis Center's Team

SFC News













ANNEEmployment Specialist

Started at SFC: September

Hometown: Cheyenne, WY

Masters in social work and Navy veteran

GEORGE

Basic Services

Started at SFC: November

2

Hometown: Charlotte, NC

2

Episcopal pilgrimage to Toledo, Spain

IIM

Accountant

Started at SFC:

August

Hometown: Tulsa, OK

Rides an Ultra Classic Harley weather permitting

KATHY

Housing Co-Director

Started at SFC: October

Hometown:
Denver. CO

Loves hiking

and mountain climbing for

Urban Educati®

ØST. FRANCIS CENTER

KELDA

Outreach Worker

Started at SFC: September

Hometown:

Marieta, OH

Her name in Norse means fountain or spring

ZACH

Basic Services

★
Started at SFC:

August

⊀ Hometown:

Tampa Fl

Tampa, FL **∡**

His parents are ministers and has a twin brother

FULL STEAM AHEAD FOR URBAN EDUCATION AT SAINT FRANCIS CENTER

St. Francis Center recently took over the Urban Education Program, upon the closure of Denver Urban Matters, and is full-steam ahead developing a meaningful and engaging program to offer groups of all ages the opportunity to learn, serve, and create hope in the vibrantly multicultural and urban community of Denver. Each experience can be fully customized to meet the needs of your group, and is appropriate for people of all ages. Whether working with us for a day, weekend, half-week,

or full week, all participants will receive an educated and realistic perspective on the complexities of homelessness and poverty.

Our flexible program allows for groups to volunteer in areas where they feel compelled and to learn about topics that interest them. All Urban Education experience allow for groups to dig deep, to inspire conversations about what homelessness and poverty looks like, to change attitudes and understandings, and most importantly to love and serve the community of Denver.

We hope that the Urban Education Program will be a starting point in your mission to inspire hope, transform lives, and work to end homelessness and poverty.

Interested in learning more? Ready to book your experience? Contact Susan Vaho, Urban Education Coordinator: susanv@sfcdenver.org.



SAINT FRANCIS APARTMENTS AT CATHEDRAL SQUARE

Sub-contractor challenges have delayed the opening of the the apartments until early December. Tentative plans for a Grand Opening Ceremony are slated for Sunday, January 14th.

Volunteer Corner

INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING AT SFC?

Due to the ever-changing nature of SFC programming, current volunteer opportunities and the volunteer application can be found on our website. We look forward to hearing from you!

sfcdenver.org/volunteer

EXTENDED SERVICE HOURS

With the help of some very dedicated volunteers, the Basic Services team at the Day Center is now able to open the Mail & Storage desk at 7:15 a.m. each weekday. This is a tremendous benefit to many of the Day Center guests who can now get a clean outfit out of their storage bag, take a shower, check their mail, and access other essential services all before heading to work for the day.

We are also hoping to keep Mail & Storage open later in the afternoon, but are in need of additional volunteers to make that happen. Please contact Laura Kuhlmann if you are interested in volunteering at the Day Center, (or anywhere else!)





WELCOME HOME! PROJECT SUPPORTS NEWLY HOUSED

Volunteers with the Welcome Home! Project set a lofty goal of giving a hand-made blanket to each new resident—all 50 people— at the soon-to-open Saint Francis Apartments at Cathedral Square.

Generous and talented individuals from Saint John's Cathedral, Calvary Baptist Quilting Group, Heather Gardens Knitters, Knitters for Peace, Mountain View Friends Meeting, St. Ann's 8th grade girls, Tattered Cover Knitters, and Windsor Gardens Church came together and almost doubled the goal for the number of blankets needed, and helped ensure that all

the residents will be welcomed into their homes with a beautiful gift, made with love just for them. Thank you to all involved!

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Support SFC

IN-KIND NEEDS

In-kind contributions are greatly needed and appreciated at St. Francis Center, as they enable us to offer much-needed items to our guests, while keeping our costs as low as possible and to spend a full 91% of our funding on direct services and programs. Please visit our website for a current listing of most needed items.

sfcdenver.org/donate

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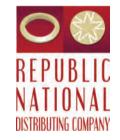


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OCCASIONS

CATERING



















MATCHING GIFTS

Have you recently made a financial donation to St. Francis Center? Many companies match their employees' donations dollar-for-dollar. Make your donation to SFC go further by checking with your human resources department to see if your company will match your donation. If they will, please be sure to let both us and them know about your donation to St. Francis Center.



ENTERPRISE ZONE TAX CREDIT

St. Francis Center is a Denver Enterprise Zone (DEZ) designee. Cash contributions from \$200-\$100,000 per year are eligible to receive a 25% Colorado income tax credit, in addition to the normal federal and state charitable contribution benefits. In-kind contributions valued at \$250 and more receive a 12.5% credit. Both individuals and businesses are eligible for DEZ credit. The credit cannot exceed Colorado tax liability; however, excess credit may carry over for up to five years. We are required by the Colorado Department of Revenue to submit your paperwork with the last four digits of your Social Security Number or State or Federal Tax Paver Identification Number. If we don't already have your number on file, please provide it with your donation.

CONTACT

St. Francis Center 2323 Curtis Street Denver, CO 80205 Non-Profit Org. U.S. Postage PAID Denver, CO Permit No. 1011



Saint Francis Center's mission is to reveal God's love for humanity by providing a safe place for people who are homeless in Metro Denver to meet their basic needs for day-to-day survival while offering them assistance to transition out of homelessness.

sfcdenver.org