

# The Denver Foundation



NEWS FOR DONORS

# Noteworthy



The Denver  
Foundation

## INSIDE

3

A century  
of impact

6

Creating pathways for  
others to thrive: A profile  
of Brenda Allen

8

2025 100<sup>th</sup>  
events calendar

## MISSION

The mission of The Denver Foundation is to inspire people and mobilize resources to strengthen our community. We envision a Metro Denver that is racially equitable in its leadership, prosperity, and culture.

The Denver Foundation  
1009 Grant Street  
Denver, CO 80203

303.300.1790  
denverfoundation.org

@TDFcommunity



# CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

With immense gratitude, I reflect on the positive impact we have made — together — over the past 100 years and the hope I see for our future.

The Denver Foundation's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025 marks more than just the passage of time. It symbolizes the strength, resilience, and unity of our community. It is a testament to the trust placed in us over the last century and the collaboration that has allowed us to tackle the most complex challenges of the changing times.

This anniversary is a powerful reminder of our stability and innovation. Most importantly, it symbolizes your generosity — and the generosity of the thousands of donors and fundholders who have made it possible to lift up this community for past and future generations.

Throughout 2025, we will commemorate this special occasion by celebrating the past and honoring those who have made an impact in our community. You will have many opportunities to engage throughout the year, including a variety of learning events and celebrations. We will be inspired by stories of influential donors, community leaders, staff, and grantees. And we will share the faces and places that make this city what it is today!

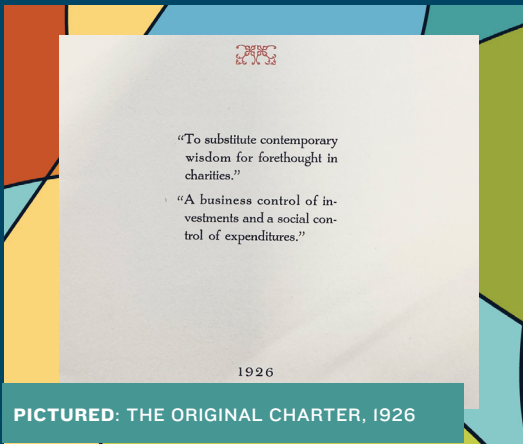
This edition of Noteworthy is not solely about our history or our past. In this issue, we highlight Dr. Brenda J. Allen, who is making a tremendous impact in our community today, and we share a variety of ways you can join us as we carve out a bold vision for our future. Please join us in the celebration. We all have so much to be proud of.

Javier Alberto Soto, President and CEO

# A CENTURY OF IMPACT

*Our generous donors, community partners, and staff—past and present—have been on the front lines of issues affecting Colorado and the world for a century. As times change, so do our organization’s priorities and the donors we support. But two elements remain constant: our commitment to building a better world, and our partners’ trust in us as we come together to build better communities.*





PICTURED: THE ORIGINAL CHARTER, 1926



PICTURED: THE SANTA SHOP OPERATING IN 1990



PICTURED: WARREN VILLAGE BUILDING SITE, A GRANTEE OF THE DENVER FOUNDATION



PICTURED: CHILDREN LEARNING TO COOK AT FOOD BANK OF THE ROCKIES, A CRITICAL NEEDS GRANT RECIPIENT



**2025 — 100 YEARS**  
The Denver Foundation turns 100. Join us in our centennial celebration and help shape a new vision for the next 100 years.

**1925 — BUILDING A FOUNDATION**

Inspired by the legacy of giving within Denver communities, a group of like-minded Denverites created The Denver Foundation. From the start, we had a forward-thinking mindset. The 1926 charter notes that the focus was on equipping donors with opportunities and tools they needed and creating an endowment or fund that was promised to grow, sustain itself, and remain beneficial for years, decades, and now centuries to come.

**1930S — THE SANTA SHOP**

In 1931, we began funding the Santa Shop, a holiday toy shop supported by individuals and philanthropic organizations to bring joy to those struggling financially during the holiday season. Orville Whitford saved vacation time so he could take off from his day job yearly to manage the Santa Shop. He and fellow volunteer Agnes Beisner loved seeing the joy it brought to more than 4,000 children its first year and chose to volunteer every year afterwards for two decades. We supported the Santa Shop for more than 50 years.

**1975 — MILLION-DOLLAR MILESTONE**

We look back at 1975 as a critical year for us: It marked our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and we surpassed \$1 million in grants given to the community. It also marked an acceleration in our grantmaking.

**2006 — CRITICAL NEEDS**

Originally created to meet basic human needs such as food, heat, and shelter for the most vulnerable people in Metro Denver after the 2001 economic downturn, the Critical Needs fund grew dramatically in 2008 to provide immediate relief as food pantries across Denver felt the strain. Later, this expanded to include other pressing needs. Today, it's our most responsive fund when emergencies arise.

1925      1927      1930      1940      1950      1970      1997      2006      2012      2025

**1927 — AWARDING OUR FIRST GRANT**

We received our first gift in 1927 from Distribution Committee member John Kernan "J.K." Mullen. Mullen founded the Colorado Mining and Elevator Company and was also known for his success in the flour mill industry. Mullen's \$1,000 donation paved the way for our first grant to support the Community Chest of Denver, which we know today as Mile High United Way.



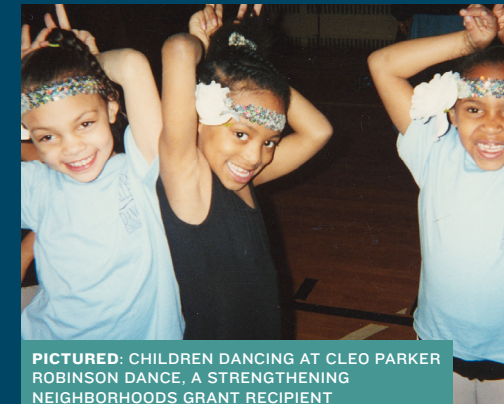
PICTURED: STAFF FROM FORMER GRANTEE MILE HIGH CHILDCARE ASSOCIATION, 2002



PICTURED: A GATHERING IN THE NEW WING AT ST. ANNE'S HOME THAT OPENED IN 1946, A PEAK YEAR OF THE POLIO VIRUS.



PICTURED: PATTI JEANNE HARRINGTON



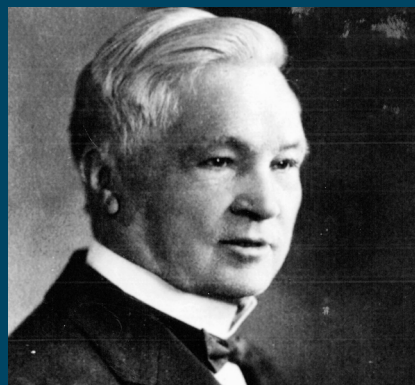
PICTURED: CHILDREN DANCING AT CLEO PARKER ROBINSON DANCE, A STRENGTHENING NEIGHBORHOODS GRANT RECIPIENT

**2012 — GIVING CIRCLES**

The Denver African-American Philanthropist Giving Circle was created as intentional space for Black philanthropists to direct how they are investing and how funds are distributed to the communities they seek to support. Since 2012, our Giving Circle movement has greatly expanded, adding the Colorado Asian American Pacific Islander Circle and LatinasGive! to name a few.



PICTURED: MEMBERS OF THE DENVER AFRICAN AMERICAN PHILANTHROPIST GIVING CIRCLE IN 2024



PICTURED: JOHN KERNAN "J.K." MULLEN

**1940S — ANSWERING THE CALL**

As World War II erupted, many mothers found themselves in the workforce, creating a great need for child care assistance and other support. As grant applications poured in, we supported child care programs, daycare facilities, and community centers. Our partnerships with many of these organizations lasted well beyond the end of the war and continue to this day.

**1950S — A FOCUS ON PUBLIC HEALTH**

We responded to the polio health crisis by funding the St. Anne's Home and other organizations dedicated to caring for children afflicted with polio. We also provided funds to create an educational film that taught the public how to recognize the signs of the disease, and shed light on the polio vaccine.

**1973 — NEW LEADERSHIP**

Patti Jeanne Harrington was hired as our first paid executive director. During Harrington's first year in leadership our total assets grew by 50%, to \$2.8 million. We have had just six executive directors in our first century, each with their own unique contributions. Harrington served as director for the next 13 years.

**1997 — STRENGTHENING NEIGHBORHOODS**

After listening closely to the community's needs, we created the Strengthening Neighborhoods program, which opened the door to grassroots community organizations that aim to help solve neighborhood issues from within. The program's first grant was awarded to Cultivando, an organization we still support today.



## CREATING PATHWAYS FOR OTHERS TO THRIVE

PICTURED: DR. BRENDA J. ALLEN, PHOTO BY @ARMANDO\_GENEYRO

As the former Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Colorado Denver and the Anschutz Medical Campus, Professor Emerita Brenda J. Allen, Ph.D., is a powerful advocate for equity in higher education. Her legacy is deeply intertwined with her commitment to social justice and educational empowerment. Her scholarly contributions, particularly her groundbreaking book "Difference Matters: Communicating Social Identity", have made a significant impact on the field of organizational communication and social identity, with an emphasis on higher education.

Allen's journey as a Black woman navigating predominantly white spaces is defined by a deep sense of purpose and a commitment to fostering change for all groups facing systemic barriers. Now retired, her work as a consultant, philanthropist, and advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) continues to focus on creating pathways for others to thrive in environments where they have historically been marginalized.

Allen continues to influence the world through her philanthropy and consulting endeavors.

*“It’s about aligning actions with values, not just in social identity categories, but also in areas like climate change and environmental sustainability.”*

— BRENDA J. ALLEN

“My involvement in philanthropy has created marvelous moments that align with my educational efforts. For instance, while working with The Denver Foundation, I was impressed by the depth of their community connections and their approach to community-based grantmaking,” Allen reflects.

To ensure ongoing support for issues that are close to her heart, Allen established a testamentary-endowed field of interest fund at The Denver Foundation. A field of interest fund allows donors to support a specific area of interest forever. Donors can choose a broad or narrow area of interest, such as a certain population, a city or geographic region they care about, or even an area of research.

In Allen’s case, upon her passing, the fund will be named the beneficiary of her retirement accounts, with grants distributed to organizations working in education and economic opportunity. Because it is a field of interest fund, Allen can also make direct qualified charitable distributions from her IRA, up to \$105,000 a year, allowing her to contribute meaningfully during her lifetime.

Her approach to philanthropy and planned giving stems from her belief that DEI is essential for meaningful societal progress. For Allen, planned giving is more than a financial strategy — it’s a powerful tool for making philanthropy accessible and inclusive.

“Being on the boards of organizations like The Colorado Trust and DSST allow me to bring my own lenses to their processes. Early experiences with philanthropic services helped me realize that some traditional methods weren’t as inclusive or thoughtful as they could be,” she shares.

Allen’s work with the foundation transcends monetary donations; it represents a commitment to intentional giving that creates opportunities for those who are often overlooked. Her planned giving strategy is designed to ensure that her resources are used effectively to support causes she cares deeply about after she is no longer here to guide them. This approach reflects her understanding of the importance of legacy and her desire to leave a lasting impact on the world.

“My goal is to maintain strategic, systemic, and sustainable approaches in everything I do, from grantmaking to investments. It’s about aligning actions with values, not just in social identity categories, but also in areas like climate change and environmental sustainability,” Allen says.

Allen’s planned giving strategy and her work with The Denver Foundation ensure that her legacy will continue to make a difference long after she is gone. Through her purposeful and inclusive philanthropy, Allen is not just leaving a legacy — she is building a future where the values she holds dear will continue to thrive and the act of giving is open to all who wish to participate.



PICTURED: DR. BRENDA J. ALLEN, PHOTO BY @ARMANDO\_GENEYRO

*If you are interested in opening your own field of interest fund or learning more about your charitable giving options, please contact us today.*

*To learn more about Brenda J. Allen or read her book “Difference Matters: Communicating Social Identity,” visit [differencematters.info](http://differencematters.info).*

# 2025 100<sup>th</sup>

## EVENTS CALENDAR

As we commemorate The Denver Foundation's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 2025 is a year of opportunities to connect, collaborate, and celebrate. Save the dates for some of our biggest events, and join the community in honoring our beautiful city's past, present, and future.

FEB

### MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Youth well-being is one of our core priorities. This is your chance to learn about the issue and help shape the strategies that will guide this work for the future.

MAR

### PINTS WITH PURPOSE

FREE BEER — need we say more? Our friends at Raíces Brewing will unveil our signature celebratory suds. Join us for a casual evening and raise a pint as we toast those who have made a difference over the past 100 years.

MAY

### ART OF CONNECTION

For a twist on “dinner and a show,” we invite you to join us for a meal and a mural. This is a chance for donors and nonprofit leaders to dine together and form new relationships. We will also unveil a new mural painted by local artists.

JUL

### CLIMATE COLLABORATION

Many of our donors care about and give to climate and environmental issues. Meet others who are passionate and active in this space, and stay current on emerging trends and innovative solutions.

SEP

### DIVERSITY DIALOGUE

This dynamic gathering brings together leaders, innovators, and advocates from across the philanthropic sector to discuss the vital role diversity plays in shaping effective and impactful giving now and in the future.

NOV

### CELEBRATION OF A CENTURY

The culmination of 100 years of generosity, this grand celebration marks our official centennial anniversary. Featuring live music, poetry readings, and much more. It's the can't-miss event of 2025.