

A letter from Darin Valdez

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
COLORADO ARTISTS IN RECOVERY



Dear Friends,

It is hard to find the words for how grateful we are at Colorado Artists in Recovery. In our second official year we have reached more individuals with our creative workshops and events than we ever dreamed. Over 1000 individuals attended our programs this year, that is an increase of 500% from the previous year. We wish to thank you all for your belief and support of our mission.

When I got sober 9 years ago, January 2nd, 2014, I checked into Denver Cares after living on the streets for over 7 years. I was scared. How am I going to give up the one thing that brings me comfort? I remember a counselor seeing me and asking if she could bring me anything to help. I asked for a sketchpad and a pencil. For the next few days, all I did was eat, sleep, and draw. As I moved on to a treatment center, I continued to draw when I got cravings. I rediscovered my talent, and everyone at the treatment center wanted me to create a piece for them. It gave me a sense of belonging, and usefulness, something I hadn't felt in a very long time.

At CAiR, we create space for re-igniting that creative part of yourself. So many participants have responded they thought that part of themselves was gone forever, now it is the one thing that gives them hope. To see the smiles on peoples faces when they are terrified to play music, create art, write poetry and more - and are met with thunderous applause...is a spiritual experience to never forget. These experiences are so necessary to believe in yourself once again, and give you the strength to keep going. It is in that moment that the healing power of community can help you see possibility, and start the journey of self-love.

I am most proud of the variety of creative experiences we were able to add, thanks to so many gifted artists volunteering their talents to give others hope. This year we added Violin, Guitar, Advanced Songwriting, Improvisational Dance, Spoken Word Poetry, Community Drum Circle, Monthly Open Mic Nights, Art Shows, Open Art Studio, Creative Meditation, Trauma-Informed Yoga, Creative Writing, Circle Singing, and more. We were able to offer workshops at places like the Colorado Village Collaborative, The Gathering Place, and The Don't Look Back Center, which serve our unhoused neighbors. Overall, we held over 150 creative workshops and events to our community, and partnered with over 25 organizations to help reach so many people with an alternate pathway of recovery.

In 2023, we intend to keep this momentum going. We have received grants from Caring for Denver Foundation and Signal Behavioral Health to continue offering these needed services for FREE! We have also received over \$30,000 in individual donations from generous donors in our community, many who have participated in our programs. We are humbled by the support from all of you, and are excited to keep providing this creative path of recovery.

In deepest gratitude,

