

THE CHARITIES

STEM aims to give students a leg up in technology

BY JUSTIN GUERRIERO

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Few would argue with the statement that Colorado's youth are the future of the state and education is critical to a successful future.

The Colorado Education Initiative (CEI), through Colorado STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) programs, is trying to improve the odds for successful futures for Colorado youths.

"CEI is a nonprofit focused on K-12 STEM education," said Angela Baber, CEI's Director of STEM. "We really focus on supporting educations to ensure that every student in Colorado is prepared and unafraid to succeed in college, career and life."

A majority of Colorado students do not have access to such programs, which is the biggest issue facing the CEI and Colorado STEM.

"The value that effective STEM education and opportunity [is that it] allows students to solve real-world problems, to have relevant and interesting issues that they tackle through application of knowledge, and it really fosters 21st Century skills like critical

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Students at Prairie Middle School participate in a STEM class, part of the Colorado Education Initiative's focus.

thinking," Baber said.

The overarching goal of CEI and its STEM programs is to create an environment within the school's education system in which such educational programs will become standard.

"It needs to become standard, otherwise we will not be preparing our

children," Baber said. "I think we need to focus where we're not providing high-quality opportunities to our students."

One current problem is the lack of in-state retention of skilled workers.

But if STEM programs can become more readily available to students,



COLORADO EDUCATION INITIATIVE - COLORADO STEM

Purpose: Youth educational development

Location: Denver

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and specifically female, minority and underprivileged students, the talent gap with other states could start to close quickly.

"The focus on STEM education needs to be in ensuring rigorous, relevant real-world experiences that are coherent for students and ensuring that we increase access to these experiences to students who have typically been under-served by STEM education," Baber said.

THE CHARITIES

Children's Home carries on charitable mission

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The Denver Children's Home (DCH) is the oldest nonprofit in the state of Colorado.

The "founding mothers" of the state (the wives of the business and political leaders) established the Denver Orphan's Home in 1876 after witnessing orphans being brought into the state to work on railroads and in mines.

In 1962, it was renamed the Denver Children's Home and became a residential treatment center. For over 140 years, the DCH has provided critical services to the area's at-risk youth.

"We specialize in treating severely traumatized, abused and neglected kids and families with mental health issues," said Dr. Rebecca Hea, Executive Director of the DCH. "95 percent of our population falls below the poverty line, so we're sort of a placement of last resort when other things have failed."

The DCH currently houses about 30 kids, while also providing educational services to children aged 10-18 years. Therapists are routinely sent to people's homes, and a resource center is avail-

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JEFF FIERBERG, PROVIDED BY DENVER CHILDREN'S HOME

Denver Children's Home art therapist Myriam Reynolds works with a client.

able to anyone who walks in. Through day-to-day operations and its family resource center, the DCH serves over 600 families per year.

Dr. Hea, who began work with the DCH over 23 years ago, is adamant about the importance of the work that the home does.

"We believe that if you change the life of a child, you change the world," she said. We provide hope and healing to kids and families that have given

up, or [whom] people have given up on them, and they get better. It's an unbelievable privilege to work here."

For Dr. Hea and the home's employees and volunteers, witnessing kids who the DCH aided come back as adults is one of the most rewarding things about the job.

"A lot of times, we're the longest relationships that [these kids] have had," Dr. Hea said. "Two years ago I had a staff member that retired after 37 years. Kids



DENVER CHILDREN'S HOME

Purpose: Shelter, educate and foster youth at risk

Location: Denver

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came back and said 'I want you to bless my wedding' because he was the closest [thing] to their family."

Showing the children that they are cared for and appreciated is the name of the game.

"What I am amazed by every single day is that these kids and families have had life circumstances that are so overwhelming and might have killed us," she said. "But they're here and they're resilient; they have so much strength and investing in them and believing in them transforms their lives."