



“Reducing poverty by building skills and relationships that strengthen families and individuals.”

Winter Newsletter

Welcome to Thrive! Butler’s Winter Newsletter. We feel it is important to keep our donors and our communities in general, informed on the progress we are achieving towards our Mission, “Reducing poverty by building skills and relationships that strengthen families and individuals”.



It has been a busy time in both locations as we have Matched Teams working in both Andover and El Dorado locations. We have also been searching for new participants in both locations so we can begin new classes right after the first of the year. Andover will be starting its next class beginning January 9th at the Andover Methodist Church. Our Board has been working on fund raising activity and developing new ideas that can be executed to continue our mission. We no longer are funded through a government grant, which provided us with start-up capital for the first two years, so we rely 100% on donations, community and foundation grants, and fund raising to support our mission.

We were fortunate to once again be awarded as recipient of the George Trimble Foundation Grant this year, the Butler Rural Electric annual grant, and the City of El Dorado has also provided us with a donation to support

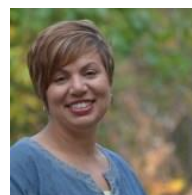


our El Dorado location. The Butler County Employee’s Association also made an end of year donation to Thrive! Butler. Our local volunteers continue to support our classes with meals each week, and we are very fortunate to have our childcare coordinators in place in

both locations and doing very well. Each week our childcare coordinators talk to the kids about a subject related to what the parents are learning about that week, in hopes of generating discussion on the way home or at the dinner table later that week.

Our Executive Director continues to make presentations to various civic organizations throughout Butler County. The content of those presentations now includes the video that was produced by the Butler Community College Communication Department for Thrive! Butler, which includes testimonials from both our Team Leaders and our Ally’s. It also includes other testimonial statements from all our participants on how the Thrive! Butler experience has helped them to develop their journey out of poverty and achieve the goals they have set during the Getting Ahead class and the Aha! process. These are great insights and all of us at Thrive! Butler are proud of these stories, and those that are being formed by the current classes.

We have also been fortunate to acquire a new Getting Ahead Facilitator for our El Dorado location. Shirley Taylor will join us and facilitate the next El Dorado class early in 2020. Also joining the Thrive! Butler team in Andover is Dr. Kristen Kuhlmann. Kristen is the Principal of Andover High School will become our Matched Team Facilitator in Andover and she will also join our Board of Directors as well. We also added Hannah Roland and Rita Dishon to our Board. Hannah is our Mid-Kansas Community Action representative which acts as our fiscal sponsor, and Rita is a former Team Leader from El Dorado.



We must say good-bye to Valecia Scribner and Travis Griffin from our Board of Directors. Valecia is one of the founding members of Thrive! Butler and the Chairperson of the



Board during its first two years of existence. Travis served on our Board for the past year and provided guidance in several areas helping Thrive! Butler to succeed during that time. Travis and his wife will be moving to the Council Grove area where Travis will continue his career. Both have left to pursue new and exciting career opportunities away from this area, although Valecia will continue to live and work at the First United Methodist Church in El Dorado.

We are currently working to attract new participants to our next El Dorado class. We plan to be hosting a table at the Kidzfest 2020 event to sign up new participants. We have also been looking for a third location to facilitate classes and expand our reach in Butler County. We are very pleased to be working with the Bluestem School District and we will be developing a Leon Site Team in early 2020. Jodi Brown, the Bluestem Child & Family Care Coordinator, will be the Thrive! Butler Getting Ahead Facilitator for our first Leon area class which we hope to start in the spring or fall of 2020. Work still needs to be done to get our meal donations, childcare and a site in Leon but we are progressing well on all those fronts.

We have some wonderful video testimonials on our website, www.thrivebutler.org that will show some of the great results our Team Leaders have achieved during their time with us. Our staff and our board are so proud of the commitment they made and kept by attending each week, and for the progress they have made with their Ally's and on their own. Thrive! Butler is making a difference in people's lives, both the Team Leaders, and with our volunteers.

We have made several updates to our website, including the ability for new participants to access the application form for our free Getting Ahead class. We continue to add new testimonials as we record their videos during certain points in their journey. We also have a Donate button on the website to collect donations through our PayPal account.



We want to thank the people who have donated to our cause, and the people who have provided meals since we started this effort in both El Dorado and Andover. All our meal donors have just been amazing, and we appreciate how they have contributed to our success.

Executive Director's Corner

By Phil Benedict



What a busy year we had in 2019. With the expansion to a third location, 2020 promises to be just as busy. I have met several new prominent members of our communities this past year, and I continue to enhance our relationships with other agency leaders to help families on their journey out of poverty. I am very encouraged by our Team Leaders, and the progress they have made in meeting their goals and developing new ones on their journey. I am proud that some have taken advantage of our relationship with the ORION Education Center to achieve their high school diplomas, and to find new employment through the Workforce Center.

I continue to attend and participate in the Andover and El Dorado Chambers, networking with other business members in those communities. That has allowed me to present the Thrive! Butler story and to provide the updates and progress our Team Leaders have made during the year.

One of the issues we hope to address in 2020, is the Welfare Cliff. Our participants work hard to increase their earning potential through relationships, education and a greater self-confidence. However, when they reach the point of losing all their assistance, they refuse promotions or increases in pay as it does not cover the loss of the government assistance they have been receiving. We are advocating for a step down of benefits rather than losing them all together, the cliff, so that people on this journey will continue to work hard and accept promotions and wage increases to support their families and reach a point where they are no longer needing government assistance.

If you know of an organization that would like to hear more about Thrive! Butler, let me know by writing to me at thrivebutlerks@gmail.com or through our website, www.thrivebutler.org. I am always happy to hear from members of the community regarding Thrive! Butler, and the volunteer roles we have and need in each of our locations. I hope you make time to support our effort, and to be a good listener to those on their journey out of poverty, and off government assistance.

Without intervention, it is likely children living in poverty, will become parents living in poverty.