



# THE SCOOP



WORK OPTIONS FOR WOMEN'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

January 2021

Vol. 2

## Board Perspective

by Jenna Geunther  
Board Member

2021 marks my sixth year as WOW Volunteer, Board Treasurer and Super Fan - I just can't get enough of the incredible impact Work Options has on individuals, families and communities!

There have been several times in my own life when I needed someone to show me the possibilities and guide me through obstacles; I have been blessed with many such people and feel strongly that I need to keep the good vibes going. I challenge you to continue doing the same. THANK YOU for your support, contributions and commitment to this amazing organization!



A Student in the Training Center



Jenna lives in Lakewood where she loves spending time outdoors with her husband, 3 children and 2 dogs

## Student Stories

by Yoselin Corrales  
Manager of Student Services

### Nadine

Nadine started the program while working part-time, making \$13/hour, which left her unable to make ends meet every month. After completing training, receiving her ServSafe certifications, and updating her resume with Work Options staff, she was hired by another non-profit organization. Nadine is now working full time, making \$23/hour (\$47,840 annually) which has helped her to stabilize her finances and living situation. Nadine is now paying it forward by working to help others who are experiencing homelessness.

### Amy

Amy was a diligent student who felt that her legal history was holding her back from finding employment. After taking Work Options' Job Readiness classes during her training, Amy began working one-on-one with Work Options staff to practice interviewing and effectively responding to prospective employers' concerns about her past. Amy earned ServSafe certifications, as well as the American Culinary Federation supported Prep Cook Certification from Work Options, which helped to add industry-recognized credentials to her resume. Amy has now found sustainable employment where she has full benefits including health insurance and paid time off! She is using her new culinary skills to prepare fresh, healthy meals for her guests.

# Community Collaboration

by **Kristi Hornick**

**Director of Recruiting & Community Engagement**

No one agency is an island when it comes to serving our community members. Networking is not only a vital and necessary component, it brings a vibrancy to the work we do. In the recruitment area, there is a synergy created in our collaboration with over 80 community partners including The Gathering Place.

Karissa Ciarlelli, Education and Job Readiness Program Manager for The Gathering Place, says "I love that I have a roster of amazing agencies like Work Options at my fingertips to reference for clients. My work as an individual can only go so far, so providing resource navigation to other agencies that I know and trust is pertinent."



Work Options partners with Second Chance Center for a recruiting event and lunch give-away

The populations that both agencies serve face numerous and significant barriers to employment, and that is where Work Options thrives - in fulfilling our mission to help our students secure sustainable employment. When asked why she chooses to partner with Work Options, Karissa says, "I have seen first-hand how beneficial the Work Options program is for its participants. One woman I spoke with told me that she had landed a job only two days after graduating from the Work Options program. I know that Work Options will provide community members with the certifications and skills necessary to thrive in the culinary industry, as well as offering resume support and life skills. I am thrilled to be able to partner with Work Options to help offer a fresh opportunity to community members most in need."

In 2020, 84% of Work Options' students were enrolled through a direct a referral from our community partners, and we look forward to extending our reach in the Denver Metro area, creating new collaborations this year!



# Making Meals that Matter

by **Angela O'Leary**  
*Director of Operations*

The Work Options culinary team finished 2020 strong! Our core training center staff continues to work with our students to produce thousands of Emergency Meals each month through a contract with the City of Denver. These meals are distributed by the Denver Housing Authority to our neighbors in the Sun Valley area who are facing hunger.



The Helping Hen crew catering lunches for UHealth staff



The Helping Hen's Chef Bryan dressed for Holiday festivities

The Helping Hen food truck gained some exposure during the fall and early winter - featured by The Denver Channel, 5280 Magazine, 303 Magazine and Westword! With wintery weather setting in The Helping Hen's crew has also shifted focus to provide meals for those in need.

In December, The Helping Hen produced meals for over 1,200 people for Mile High United Way's drive-through Holiday Party, as well as over 300 people during Dress for Success Denver's drive-through Holiday Giveaway. The week of Christmas, we also produced hot meals for over 300 families at the Denver Indian Center. In January we catered over 2,000 lunches for front-line medical workers at UHealth Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora.

Producing all of these meals gives our students a way to practice the skills they are learning in the program, and the self-esteem that comes from being able to give back to your community in a meaningful way. In 2020, we enrolled 146 students and saw 74 complete training - with 71 to date finding sustainable employment!

**THE HELPING HEN**  
 ROTISSERIE WITH A MISSION

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# The Funding to Move Forward

by Bailey Denmark  
Development Director

Whew! The last few months of 2020 were a whirlwind, but we made it. The Development team worked tirelessly all year to secure emergency funding, government grants, foundational support, and generous contributions from individual donors. Despite the ever-present threat of COVID-19 and the tightening of purse strings all over the corporate, individual, and grant-making communities, Work Options managed to secure nearly one million dollars in support! Work Options was unable to host our annual WomenCook gala in 2020, but many individual supporters still generously donated. Thank you to everyone who donated on Colorado Gives Day, and to all of our supporters for helping us through the most difficult year any of us have ever faced. Your generosity and support of our mission is truly awe-inspiring!

We hit the ground running in 2021 and there's no end in sight to our momentum when it comes to seeking out new and exciting collaboration and funding opportunities. Work Options couldn't continue to exist without supporters and champions like you, though.

**Please consider making a donation  
to Work Options today!**

**[www.workoptions.org](http://www.workoptions.org)**  
(click on the donate button)

**Mail checks to**  
Work Options  
1200 Federal Blvd.  
Denver, CO 80204

or get in touch with Development Director  
Bailey directly at [bdenmark@workoptions.org](mailto:bdenmark@workoptions.org)



A Student in the Work Options Career Center



A Student making Enchiladas in the Work Options kitchen

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# A Note from our Executive Director

by **Julie Stone**  
*Executive Director*

Hello Friends,

We made it through 2020! There were difficult moments and there were downright confounding times and through it all we have grown stronger, more resilient, more creative and learned more about ourselves than we ever dreamed possible. Our Work Options team is amazing! We have all had doubts and personal challenges and yet we have all decided that the managed risk we take is worth it. We have adapted to each new



Executive Director, Julie Stone, being interviewed by Denver 7

Covid requirement with thoughtfulness and kept our students' safety and employment needs as our focus. That singleness of purpose is evidenced by the 146 students who enrolled and the 71 who became sustainably employed. Although these numbers fell short of our original goals, they far surpass what could be expected in the midst of a deadly pandemic. I could not be more proud of each member of the Work Options team and their work this year.

I would also like to commend our students. It is not easy to enroll in a program that is 35 hours a week, where you are on your feet most of the time learning new skills surrounded by new teachers and students, add to that the pandemic and it is really hard. Also, during the pandemic our students had to trust that Work Options' safety measures would keep them safe and that their commitment to each other was enough to discourage risky behavior outside of class time. It was asking a lot and 71 students persevered and became employed. Probably the most surprising thing this year is how easily our students became employed. Although there are far fewer jobs available there are also far fewer people looking for employment and so our students have become employed with relative ease.

None of this work would be possible without your support and your belief in the work we do. So please join me in the pride I take in the success of each of our students. Take pride in each medium dice mastered, each housing application filled, each counseling session absorbed, each catering fulfilled and each day of fear overcome. 2020 taught us a lot, and yet here we are in 2021 and it feels much the same. So please continue to support us as we welcome in new students, new challenges and new opportunities. WOW is strong and resilient and together we made a difference. Together we will make a difference!

*Julie Stone*