



Initiatives in Action: Youth Success Initiative



We can do more together.

Bridging The Gap To Success

“This is the first time in my life that I have felt successful,” says 23-year-old Gordon Davidson, “that I felt like everything was going to be okay.”

That may sound like a dramatic statement coming from such a young man, but for Gordon Davidson it is the truth.

A product of Colorado’s foster care system, Gordon says he spent his youth feeling out of place and not particularly loved by anyone. He says his first foster family was abusive. The second provided him a roof over his head and food, but not the loving family he desired.

When he turned 18 and graduated from high school, his foster family threw him a party and then told him that he had to move out. Like countless other foster children, Gordon had officially aged out of the system. Technically and legally, his foster family owed him nothing more and any state sponsored benefits like health care were gone. Gordon was, truly, on his own.

“My first thought was, what am I going to do?,” says Davidson, “Where am I going to go?”

Gordon says that the countless case workers, therapists and social workers he knew growing up had never told him what would happen after his 18th birthday.

“They don’t really tell you about what happens when you turn 18. They don’t prepare you for that,” says Gordon.

For the next few years, like many former foster youth, Gordon was technically homeless. He slept on friends’ couches, dabbled in drugs, tried and failed on his first attempt at college and had a hard time holding down a job. He says he was going nowhere, fast.

But then, something happened. While working a couple of jobs in the mountains, Gordon says he turned a corner. He says he finally realized he was the key to his own happiness and that he had to take control of his life. So, he packed up, moved back to Denver, enrolled in college and became involved with Mile High United Way’s Bridging the Gap program.

Bridging the Gap provides foster youth with financial education classes, matched savings accounts, assistance with finding affordable housing, employment and



On his own at 18, former foster youth Gordon Davidson needed help to find his way. Mile High United Way’s Bridging the Gap program was there to show him how.

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scholarships for college, and peer networking and adult partner coaching.

“The people I met through Bridging the Gap became my family,” says Gordon. “They kept me motivated and on track.”

After earning his associates degree in computer networking, Gordon interned with Bridging the Gap for eight weeks. Turns out his desire to give back made

quite an impression. One week before his internship ended, Gordon was offered a full-time position with Mile High United Way’s Information Technology team!

“I still can’t believe how fortunate I am,” says Davidson. “My life is transformed. Bridging the Gap and Mile High United Way changed my life!”

For more information about our Youth Success Initiative, please visit our website at www.unitedwaydenver.org.

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Mile High United Way