

# RITEVIEW

Spring 2019



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This March, Lee Schlessman, member of the Scottish Rite Foundation’s Board of Trustees, and visionary passed away. His leadership and vision in collaboration with his Trustee colleagues shaped our RiteCare® program into its current form. It was through his appreciation for serving children and families in their communities that the momentum to expand our programs was born in 1986.

The articles in this RiteView publication embody his respect and understanding that each community uniquely knows how to serve the children locally. He was a strong advocate for expanding RiteCare® supported programs throughout the State.

The following tribute written by Vern Ingraham and Dr. Deborah Hayes is a joyous celebration of Lee Schlessman’s life, journey, and diligence highlighting his work, respect and dedication to helping others. The legacy he leaves behind is evident in this RiteView and across our great state!

May is Better Hearing and Speech Month. During this month Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology professionals highlight their role in providing diagnostic, intervention and prevention work. This RiteView amply demonstrates how our RiteCare® partners, including our Treasure Chest colleagues, are achieving better communication for all children. With Scottish Rite Foundation help, we make every month “better hearing and speech month” for so many children. We are so fortunate and grateful for the Foundation’s continued support and partnership! And equally important, I want to thank each of you for your dedication, contributions, and expertise in our field of speech, language, and learning for all of the children and their families we have the privilege to serve.

Lee E. Schlessman, 33° Grand Cross and His Legacy  
by  
Vernon B. Ingraham, 33° Grand Cross, Executive Secretary, Scottish Rite Foundation  
and  
Dr. Deborah Hayes, Emeritus Chair - Kelley Family/Schlessman Family  
Scottish Rite Masons Chair in Childhood Language Disorders



Dolores Schlessman, Deborah Hayes, Lee Schlessman - February 2010

Lee Schlessman served on the Board of Trustees for the Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado for 45 years. He was elected to the Board in January 1972 following the death of his father, Gerald A. Schlessman, a principal founding member of the Foundation in 1953. He retired from the Board in emeritus status on July 31, 2017, and passed away in March 2019. This joint article presents several reflections by the two co-authors who worked closely with Lee.

Vern Ingraham's Reflections: Lee became a Mason in 1951 and served the fraternity in several capacities including Potentate of El Jebel Shrine in 1970. In his professional life he was president and chairman of the board of the Greeley Gas Company as well as a long-serving member of the Board of the YMCA of the Rockies and the chairman of the board of AAA. He and his family foundation generously supported such organizations as the Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado, YMCA of the Rockies, Denver Museum of Nature and Science, Denver Public Library, Denver Zoo, and Denver Art Museum.

My association with Lee began in February 2000. Over the years I had many an occasion to meet with Lee privately in his office or at lunch together. Sometimes we would talk about non-business matters from politics to gardening. And in season I would always bring him tomatoes from my garden which I subsequently learned was tradition which he enjoyed with more than just myself.

In the early 2000's I attended a social function for various foundation organizations in the Denver area. Lee was not in attendance at the function when I was introduced to a former employee of the Greeley Gas Company. We had a wonderful chat and I ask him what Lee was like as a boss. The man said Lee was the best boss in the world to work for. He was respectful to his employees and allowed them the freedom to succeed, while at the same time having high expectations for their performance. Yes indeed, that was Lee.

Lee left an indelible imprint on the Foundation through his leadership as its Treasurer and Chairman of the Finance Committee. His efforts were ever dedicated to securing the Foundation's financial underpinning and supporting an expansion of speech-language and learning services throughout Colorado. Lee's influence and guidance combined with that of his esteemed colleagues on the Board of Trustees saw the Foundation grow from serving 112 children in one location in 1972 to 809 children in 17 locations in 2017. During his years of Foundation service 19,010 children and their families received speech-language care with the Foundation's financial support.

Lee Schlessman's leadership and dedication are best expressed by our 18<sup>th</sup> century Masonic forefather Albert Pike, when he said, "What we do for ourselves dies with us. What we do for others and the world remains and is immortal."

Deborah Hayes' Reflections: For almost 35 years, I had the privilege of working with Lee in promoting the mission and goals of the Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado. In our work together, I was deeply impressed with Lee's visionary leadership, respectful partnership, and genuine compassion for children and families.

Lee's visionary leadership was evident at our first meeting. In 1983, Lee asked me to help the Foundation expand their support to communities throughout Colorado. At the time of his request, the Foundation's support for speech therapy was only available to children who received services at Children's Hospital in Denver. Lee appreciated that the Foundation's assets came from Masons throughout Colorado, but children distant from Denver could not benefit from the generosity.

He respected the important contributions of Masons in communities large and small, and believed in equality of opportunity for children and families in those communities. Lee's request ultimately led to expansion of Scottish Rite Foundation support in communities ranging from Sterling to Cortez, La Junta to Grand Junction, and all along the Front Range. That expansion of services continues today through Lee's generous and enthusiastic support for telepractice in speech therapy – the delivery of therapy services over the internet to children in geographically remote or underserved communities.

When the opportunity arose for the Foundation to fund an endowed chair at Children's Hospital, Lee took an active leadership role in that effort. He realized that the Foundation would benefit from consistent, dedicated clinical leadership through an endowed chair. He not only actively raised funds from the community for this endeavor, but generously donated support with his family through the Schlessman Family Foundation. Dedicated in 2003, the Kelley Family/Schlessman Family Scottish Rite Masons' Chair in Childhood Language Disorders at Children's Hospital will continue to provide clinical leadership to the Scottish Rite Foundation in the years ahead.

Through everything, Lee was a respectful partner. He believed we held equal roles in fulfilling the Foundation's mission and goals. He did not demand his version of successful outcomes, but he did expect measurable results for children and families. This expectation allowed clinicians to develop meaningful measures for specific programs.

Lee was a private, quiet, and humble man, never discussing his many accomplishments, community service, or well-deserved honors. He was generous, warm, and respectful, a quiet and highly effective leader, a champion of his fellow man. I will remember him always with great affection.

Submitted by: Vern Ingraham, Executive Secretary, Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado



# *St. Mary's Hospital Speech and Language Program*



The Rite Care Speech and Language Program at St. Mary's provides group and individual therapy for children of all ages and diagnoses.

The children are seen for an evaluation and then, based upon their identified needs, can be placed in individual therapy, group therapy, or they can receive both individual and group therapy.

Thanks to the Scottish Rite Foundation's financial support for families, we can plan our treatment programs based on what is best for the child. Our programs do not need to be based on insurance company limitations or financial resources of each family. This allows us to keep our focus on the child.

Thank You Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado.



# Children's Hospital Colorado

## Community Benefit Grant – Early Intervention Parent Education Program

Children are often diagnosed with genetic syndromes soon after birth and sometimes before birth. Children's Hospital Colorado has many clinics that focus on supporting families with infants who have received a genetic diagnosis. The eXtraordinary Kids clinic is one such clinic that addresses the needs of children diagnosed with chromosome variations through multidisciplinary care. Children born with X&Y Chromosomal variations typically have developmental delays impacting language development, as demonstrated by lack of babbling as an infant with delays in using words and combining words into sentences as a toddler. Despite receiving an early diagnosis and suspecting speech-language delays, these infants and toddlers are often unable to access services until such an age that the speech and language delays are diagnosed, which can be after two years of age and the opportunity for needed intervention has been lost.

Parent education programs are beneficial to these families but are not reimbursable by insurance nor Medicaid, thus creating a challenge for families to afford. With the Community Benefit Grant provided by Scottish Rite Masons, monies were received in 2018 which initiated a program called ABCs of Play: First Giggles to First Words provided by two SLP's within the Audiology, Speech and Learning Department of Children's Hospital Colorado.

First Giggles to First Words is a parent intervention class that focused on teaching parent strategies to incorporate into activities of daily living and play routines. Over the past year, two classes have been offered supporting 6 families with a child diagnosed with a medical or genetic disorder that will inevitably lead to a speech and language disorder. One of the class's goals was to teach families normal development of speech-language skills for the parents to monitor their own child's play and communication skills as their infant or toddler grows. A second goal area was to teach parents how to use speech and language strategies in daily and play routines such as bath time, play, reading a book, and bed time.

To measure the outcome of the class, parents completed a pre-survey prior to the class and a post-survey at the end of the class. The survey asked two questions, 1) How knowledgeable are you about monitoring your child's speech and language development? and 2) How comfortable do you feel about using speech and language strategies within your daily activities and play routines? Parents rated each question based on a Leichardt scale of 1 being uncomfortable and 5 being comfortable. Results showed that average score for question one increased from 2.67 to 4.17 for understanding of speech and language development. For question two, results rose from an average of 2.67 to 4.67. These scores show a clear increase in the parent's understanding of speech and language development along with strategies to implement into the home following attendance of the class.

Thanks to the Scottish Rite Foundation Community Benefit grant, Children's provided a free and beneficial class to families who have children who will often show delays in speech and language development due to their medical or genetic diagnosis. This much needed parent class teaches families how to be an active and present participant in the development of their child's communication skills.

Submitted by: Stephanie Coe and Michele Martinez-Chadrom, Children's Hospital Colorado

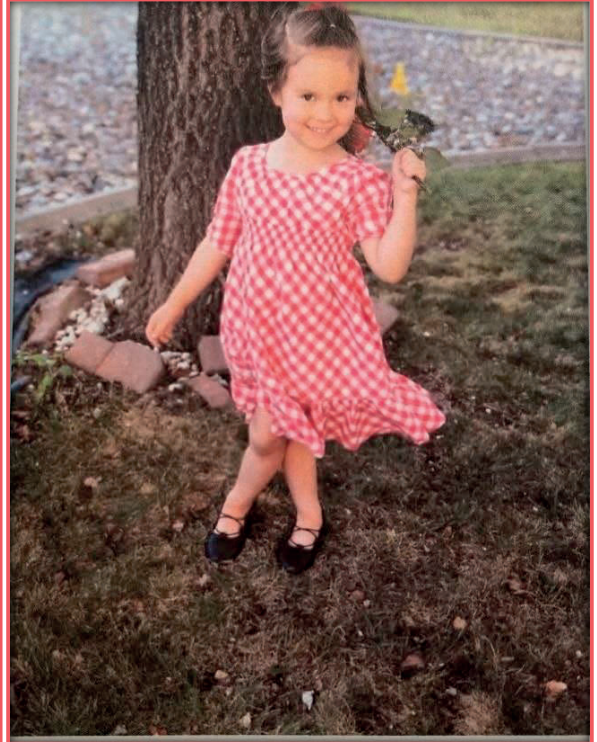
# Treasure Chest Programs

The family was one of our Treasure Chest participants at Rocky Mountain SER Early Learning Center in Grand Junction during the 2018-2019 academic year. Below is the testimony that her parents, Jamie and Kevin shared.

Dear Scottish Rite Foundation,  
Our daughter attends Head Start and was able to participate in the Treasure Chest Program this year. We had such a great experience with this program and hope to do it again next year. As parents, we constantly struggle with trying to keep our four-year-old engaged and learning without using a tablet or TV. We have tried rotating toys at home, but she always seems to get bored. The Treasure Chest Program was so beneficial in providing fun learning activities for us to engage in one on one play. The materials helped us to spend quality time together where we were able to really get to know our daughter and teach her. Our daughter loved activities and would get so excited to play with the treasure box. Thank you so much for funding this program. It's really been a great program for our family.

Sincerely,  
Kevin and Jamie

## Rocky Mountain – SER Early Learning Center Grand Junction



Submitted by: Carmen Marsh, Treasure Chest Coordinator, Rocky Mountain SER Early Learning Center

## The Piñon Project, Cortez



Laura McHenry, City of Cortez Children's Librarian, is passionate about early literacy and works closely with The Piñon Project to make sure every child in the community has the opportunity to access Treasure Chests. Piñon Staff attend library events like story time or Craft-a-palooza to meet with families and demonstrate how Treasure Chests can be used in their home to promote early literacy and develop school readiness skills. With Laura's help, families can pick up or drop off a Treasure Chest at any time during the library's operating hours.

Pictured is Laura and Layla exploring *Potty Time*, one of Piñon's Toddler Treasure Chests that includes learning activities, sticker charts, and great books for both parent and child to support reaching this important developmental milestone.

Submitted by: Maggie Tevault, Treasure Chest Coordinator, The Piñon Project, Cortez



# Treasure Chest Program

## University of Northern Colorado

The University of Northern Colorado's Audiology and Speech-Language Sciences (ASLS) program has been awarded a total of \$60,000 since initiating the Greeley Treasure Chest Program in 2017. The program utilizes boxes filled with age-appropriate books and toys to improve children's communication and language skills.

In February, the program received \$50,000, on top of \$5,000 given in both 2017 and 2018, from the Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado. The funding goal is to increase the program's reach in the community, number of weekly sessions and treasure chest bins. From fall 2017 to fall 2018, the program reached 36 families and 47 children and compiled around 70 Treasure Chests.

Deeply ingrained in the Greeley community, the program partners with United Way of Weld County and the SEVA Community, where the treasure chests stay and coaching takes place. UNC's Speech-Language Pathology program sends graduate students to guide parents on how to use the materials in the chests to improve their child's emergent literacy and language skills.

I'm really proud of this work because anytime we can impact the community while supporting our students, it's great. Our students have said positive things about it and feel it's helped them learn new skills and become more confident in their ability to work with families," said Kim Murza, Ph.D., an associate professor and graduate coordinator who also heads the Treasure Chest Program (image at right). "It's been a great way to align what we do with community partners; it's been a lot of work but well worth it."



Based on the child's age, Treasure Chests are specifically created for infant-, toddler- and preschool-age children. Each box contains books and no-battery toys, such as Legos and puppets, to focus on the parent-child interaction. After a graduate student meets with parents to help prepare them, parents take the chests home for two weeks to increase time spent together.



“We love Treasure Chests because it encourages you to be a good parent. It helps me come alongside and spend time reading and playing with them,” said Amy, who has been a participant in the program for two years with her children, five-year-old Samuel, and two-and-a-half-year-old Isaiah. “Isaiah speaks a lot more since he started the program, his vocabulary has grown and he’s starting to read now, so that’s exciting.”

Hannah Breckinridge, a Speech-Language Pathology graduate student, runs the program with three other graduate students. They meet families from 9-11 a.m. every Wednesday in 30-minute sessions and learn early intervention therapy techniques in a community setting.

“This program is honestly amazing. We’ll get some children who we think are a little delayed at first, but after showing the parents strategies once a week, they’ll come back at the end of the semester and the children are talking and pointing and saying full sentences! Before, they weren’t even saying single words,” said Breckinridge. “It’s incredible how quickly children can pick up language and how much 30 minutes a week can make an impact.”

The program is now focused on bringing in more diverse, marginalized families and those who may need more support, such as immigrant or refugee families.

—Written by Katie-Leigh Corder.

Submitted by: Dr. Kim Murza, RiteCare Program Director, University of Northern Colorado

## Gunnison Valley Events and Program Updates

The Gunnison Early Childhood Council hosted an event called the ‘Community Baby Shower’ at the end of March. Through Gunnison Valley Health Pediatric Therapy we had a table providing handouts on developmental norms and information about speech therapy services. Various summer camp options were also provided and families were able to come and ask questions about their child’s development. Bubbles and chocolate were also provided.

Speech therapy continues to be offered in preschool/daycares within both ends of the valley between Gunnison and Crested Butte which has been successful with helping working families.



Submitted by: Jennifer Moore, RiteCare Program Director Gunnison Valley Health





## CSRC – Loveland Pre-Literacy Program

In 2018, the Children's Speech and Reading Center (CSRC) provided pre-literacy education to 91 four year old children in the Loveland area. These services were provided at locations including Teaching Tree Learning Centers (formerly United Way Day Care Center) and at the Thompson Valley Pre-School.

The literacy specialists at CSRC qualify children for this program based on a child's performance on a pre-literacy assessment (Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Preschool). This assessment tool measures a child's knowledge of important emerging speech-language and literacy factors shown by research to predict later communication and reading success. The Pre-Literacy program is implemented from October through May in small groups of four children per weekly session and is provided at no cost to families, which is made possible by the generous funding of the Scottish Rite Foundation.

This program has demonstrated high success rates with helping children develop pre-literacy skills. The children involved were initially below the developmental norm compared to their peers and progressed to above the average range by the end of the program in their early communication and reading success. These sessions include age appropriate, fun, and engaging activities that help children learn these essential skills to be ready for kindergarten. We appreciate the Scottish Rite Foundation making this program possible and accessible for families as it makes a measurable impact with families in our community.

**Quick findings:** Prior to the pre-literacy program, 100% of the children were below the developmental ranges. As a group average, the post pre-literacy program resulted in 100% of the group exceeding the developmental range that predicts early reading. The individual data shows that ~75% of participants met or exceeded the development range for all six categories after the pre-literacy program. CSRC is working with the parents to ensure the children receive the services needed outside of CSRC.

Submitted by Andrea Orrison, RiteCare Program Director CSRS – Ft. Collins/Loveland

# Montrose Memorial Hospital, Letter of Thanks

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*Dear Scottish Rite Members,*

*Thank you for providing the Scottish Rite Program. My six-year-old daughter, Lael, has benefitted from your program since June of last year. Without your financial assistance, she would not be able to attend speech therapy weekly, due to the high cost of therapy. Lael is a very social, friendly little girl who likes to talk with everyone, ESPECIALLY other children. It was heartbreaking to see her try to talk with other children and see them look at her like she was speaking another language because they could not understand her words. Her speech is now becoming easier to understand, not just by her own family, but by those who do not know her. Your program is truly a blessing for Lael.*

*Thank you, Chassidy*

**Note from Program Director: With summer quickly approaching, we are looking forward to having our school-aged clients return for summer programs. Thanks to the RiteCare program and funding opportunities, this is typically a great success.**

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Submitted by: Patti Anderson, RiteCare Program Director, Montrose Memorial Hospital

## Pueblo Therapy Care Parents and Staff Express Thanks and Appreciation to Scottish Rite Foundation

Scottish Rite is fantastic! Our boys have been enrolled in both the speech therapy and the learning programs at the Pueblo clinic. If it wasn't for the Scottish Rite program, our boys would still be struggling and would not have the confidence or be as productive in school as they are now. We have seen firsthand the positive effect it has had not only with our family, but with families we have met throughout our time here at the Pueblo clinic. There are no words to say how much we appreciate the Scottish Rite Foundation.

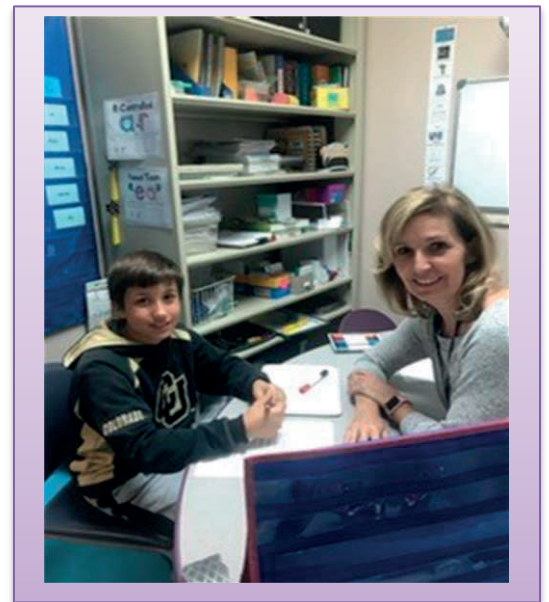
Thank you from the bottom our hearts for all you do for children and families that need your services.

Sincerely,  
The family

The success that Rayce has achieved was not only possible because of the generous support from the Scottish Rite foundation, but from the ongoing commitment and dedication that his family gives to ensure his success. The family lives 11 miles south of Pueblo, his school is 25 miles west of Pueblo, and then they bring him twice a week to the Pueblo clinic for therapy. He has perfect attendance and completes all of the assigned practice pages, even with the homework he has from school. It has been a joy to work with Rayce, and I look forward to his continued success.

Sincerely,  
Kristine Spinuzzi, MA  
Learning Services Provider

Submitted by: Stacey Bernal RiteCare Program Director – Pueblo Therapy Care



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