WHO WE ARE
The Adoption Exchange is a non-profit 501(c)(3) child welfare organization that was founded in 1983 to help establish safety and permanence in the lives of foster children. Although The Adoption Exchange was initially an exchange point for caseworkers to discuss placement of children with families seeking to adopt in the Rocky Mountain region, the organization has grown considerably over the years and engenders a powerful impact on national trends in child welfare, employs over 40 paid staff, and counts on scores of volunteers to carry out its mission.

WHERE WE ARE GOING
Today, The Adoption Exchange continues to innovate the adoption process by working towards creating a world where every waiting child will find a permanent family. Through rigorous collaboration with state, federal, and other relevant agencies, we focus on innovative child-specific strategies that provide vibrant pre- and post-adoption services that speed waiting children to caring and loving relationships that last.
Over the past year, we have lived our new mantra — Higher Touch, Higher Value - bringing deeper services and more intensity to our work on behalf of kids and families. Our goal is to find more families, place more kids, do it faster and make it last. We are so proud to report that this transformation and focus is working!

**What Higher Touch, Higher Value Looks Like**
- Expanded family support in Utah through facilitated family support groups
- Added two new child-intensive recruiters in Colorado
- Launched our much anticipated CHOICE mentoring program in Colorado
- Increased family follow-up services in Missouri
- Added in-person finalization support in Nevada

**Family Support Groups**
Family support before, during and after the adoption process is critical to long-term success. Through our work, groups are specifically designed to meet the needs of families adopting youth over the age of 13. These activities include date nights that provide training, as well as lunches and family-night activities providing support in the form of shared experiences, respite and more.

**Child-Focused (Wendy’s Wonderful Kids, WWK) Recruiters**
Colorado is increasing its capacity for Higher Touch, Higher Value through the addition of two Child-Focused (Wendy’s Wonderful Kids) recruiters. These professionals work on behalf of children the system has often forgotten; more staff ensures that each professional has the time and resources to give each child the attention they deserve. These recruiters employ aggressive practices and proven tactics focused on finding the best home for a child, starting with familiar circles of extended family, friends and neighbors, then reaching out to the children’s communities. Recent scientific research shows that children served by the WWK program are three times more likely to be adopted.

**Colorado Rolls Out CHOICE Program**
Through the generous support of the Maryellen Aylmer Fund, the Salah Foundation, the State of Colorado and other supporters, we have launched a new mentor program in Colorado — CHOICE. The CHOICE program is built on the premise that once an adult makes a connection with a youth in foster care, they will be moved to help support that youth’s successful transition into adulthood in a more permanent way. Through this intensive, child-focused recruitment program foster teens, mentors and community partners engage in a structured process that builds permanent relationships over time — providing the safety and support our kids need to launch in life.

**Missouri Expands Family Follow-up Services**
We have expanded our ability to serve those in Missouri who are interested in becoming foster parents or adopting from foster care. In partnership with the State of Missouri, we personally follow up and connect with every family that expresses interest in the process or a specific child. We ensure that they are connected with the resources they need to successfully navigate a complex system.

**Nevada Adds Adoption Finalization Support**
The Adoption Exchange is supporting adoption finalizations for children and youth adopted out of foster care in Nevada. Staff attend court adoption finalizations to support and celebrate these kids and families during the often emotional and meaningful proceedings. We bring professional photographers to capture the first moments in the lives of these newly created families, establishing a connection to our team and the support these families will need over the coming years. It doesn’t get much Higher Touch, Higher Value than this!

We hope you have found this brief overview of how The Adoption Exchange is changing the lives of kids in foster care through Higher Touch, Higher Value programs to be informative and inspiring. Our work is your work and your support is changing the world one youth at a time. To quote renowned teen/youth advocate, and foster kid himself, Josh Shipp, “Every kid is one caring adult away from a success story.” We couldn’t agree more, Josh!
Our mission is to connect children who wait in foster care and families who adopt and to support families before, during and after the adoption process.
### Revenue

- Federal Grants and Contracts: $2,150,917
- Special Events, Net of Direct Costs: $847,080
- Grants and Contracts: $859,390
- Individual Support: $372,419
- Other Revenue: $145,537

**Total Revenue:** $4,575,709

### Expenses

- Program Services: $3,822,337
- General Administration: $356,879
- Financial Development: $296,553
- Other Revenue: $145,537

**Total Expenses:** $4,475,769
STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS

- **8,458** Children have joined their families since 1983
- **304** Children have families, in FY 2015-2016
- **55%** Children belong to a minority group
- **76%** Children are 9 years or older
- **4,021** Families served by The Adoption Exchange
- **1,359** Children served in FY 2015-2016
- **39%** Children belong to a sibling group
- **40%** Children who finalized their adoption
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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>HONORARY BOARD OF DIRECTORS</th>
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<td>*Founder, Honorary Director &amp; President Emerita Dixie van de Flier Davis</td>
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<td>*Executive Director Lauren Arnold The Adoption Exchange</td>
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<td>*General Counsel Janet Perlstein Fox Rothschild LLP</td>
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Waiting is hard.
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Bang, Crash, Screaming . . .

Was it a dream? or worse . . . reality. Would you lose everything, why? How? Questions spinning in your head. Life is full of contradictions. Such as your parents, and your heart is broken into a million pieces.

My parents were not what I wanted. My mother was an alcoholic, I never knew my father. I was abused. I was hurt. No one loved me. When I thought things couldn’t get worse, my brother came along. I loved him but I got less and less attention. Then we got taken away to a foster home. I was terrified, but as long as I had my brother I was fine. But then he got adopted. My heart was smashed, so I went 7 years in the system, 7 years of pain, suffering, and crying myself to sleep.

Everyone was telling me I was never going to get adopted so I gave up. Then the most amazing couple met me. They put up with every fight, every melt down. Then I ran out of Ideas! So I got adopted. Don’t you ever let anyone tell you your future. Let me tell you something - you will find someone to call your mom and dad. You will have a great future. Some of your futures are going to take you far. Everybody has their pros and cons, once you find those people piece by piece your heart comes back together.

- By Lizzie
CHOICE

CHOICE is a program that benefits youth in foster care ages 12 to 18 whose parental rights have been terminated for a minimum of one year or for whom reunification is no longer a permanency option.

The CHOICE program is built on the premise that once you make a connection with a foster child you will be compelled to help in a more permanent way and help them transition into adulthood.

Children and mentors make connections at monthly events. Youth and potential host/mentor families get to know each other in a no pressure environment of fun, age appropriate activities.

If a child and adult express mutual interest, the relationship can advance to the next level where the child can stay a day or weekend with the host.

The host then becomes a mentor and an advocate for the youth in all aspects of his or her life - looking out for the child's overall well-being as well as engaging in recruitment activities on behalf of the youth.

The model has shown that these relationships are enduring and successful, as both youth and host family often open up to the idea of adoption.

Benefits of CHOICE

• Adults and children can get to know each other, without the initial intimidation of adoption.
• The environment is inherently nonthreatening to both the children and adults.
• The innovative approach enlarges the pool of potential adoptive families.
• The CHOICE program emphasizes youth choices in creating connections.
• As a minimum, the youth form an enduring bond with a caring adult that survives changes in placements, case workers, and even communities, and transitions with them into their own adulthood.
• The framework of this program can be replicated across the country.

CHOICE, our new weekend hosting program for older youth in foster care, kicked off in October with a fun-filled Fall Festival! Seven youth, ages 13-16, participated and left smiling with carved pumpkins, DIY masks, and cookies in hand. Sixteen adults, interested in becoming mentors, were there to cheer them on and play along.

Afterwards, a Permanency Manager at Adams County had this to say, “Thanks for the awesome planning, coordinating, and making the event really cool for us and our youth. Please thank your team as they created a welcoming environment for all of us, and especially our youth!”