

For our new friends, I'd like to give a brief introduction to Community Shares and workplace giving.

Community Shares crashed the nonprofit scene in 1986. We were founded by local grassroots and social justice organizations not traditionally included in high profile workplace giving campaigns. Our first members were community based and involved those they served in decision making.

Today, our 112 member organizations improve health and human welfare, work for a just society, foster cultural understanding and the arts, protect animal welfare, and conserve our environment.

Of course, it wouldn't be workplace giving without the workplaces.

Each fall, the staff goes out to more than 160 businesses in Colorado to offer workplace giving campaigns. We reach over 200,000 employees, or as we prefer to call them, potential donors.

Employees can give any dollar amount each paycheck, Community Shares requires no minimum donation, and designate to any number of our members or write-in their favorite nonprofits.

We then distribute those gifts to the designated charities four times each year. According to the Center on Philanthropy, workplace giving is the most cost-efficient of all fundraising methods. This year, more than 5,000 donors made more than 7,500 gifts to nonprofit organizations using Community Shares' incremental giving options. Our average gift is less than \$1 each day, and that added up to nearly \$1.5 million dollars.

Our work at Community Shares inspires philanthropy in Colorado and delivers much needed and much deserved funds to essential community organizations.

Existing as a workplace giving organization does present unique challenges when the economy falters. When faced with those challenges and the uncertainty of the year, Community Shares had the choice to scale back our efforts and limit our obligations or step forward when our nonprofit organizations and those they serve need us most.

Our greatest challenge this year is the weight of financial uncertainty carried by our corporate partners, community of donors, member agencies, and those they serve. Sometimes uncertainty can be more debilitating than knowing the obstacles ahead. Not knowing what we may face, when we will face it, or the resources we will have on hand, all of this adds an emotional cost to giving equal to the gift itself. When tomorrow is unknown, we sometimes limit our abundance to what we know we have today. Maintaining our giving goals was a lot to ask of our workplace donors, but they rose to the challenge.

I am pleased to report that we will finish this year within 5% of our giving goal – an impressive feat considering our challenges. How does an organization raise nearly \$1.5 million dollars collecting pledges \$5 at a time? With focus, determination, and an amazing community of support.

Community Shares' mission is our unbreakable promise: We connect Coloradans to the charities and causes they care about most. Any setbacks or doubts fall second to our resolve to achieve our goals.

I'd like to thank our board of directors for stepping forward and leading by example. They took a leap of faith and stood by our decision to stretch our staff and resources to maintain our goals. I am certain that our member agencies and those they serve appreciate that commitment.

### ASK BOARD TO STAND

Of course, counting up \$1.5 million in pledges made a few dollars at a time requires human resources. In 2009 our staff battled through icy roads, paper cuts, parking hassles, suspect handwriting, an unprecedented international economic recession, and personal challenges and changes – and did it all with a smile and plenty of laughter.

They are a very special group. While I appreciate that they make me look like a much better CEO than I'm currently ready to be, I am most thankful that sharing my days with them has made me a better person. Thank you. I'd like to recognize

Mary Snyders – Deputy Director  
Jodi Korthuis – Member Services Manager  
Erin Atwell – Community Giving Manager

Jason Manke – Communications Manager  
Rose Weaver – Accounting Manager  
Courtney Calvin – Administrative Assistant  
Joseph McNeill – Operations Assistant

A year ago, when I became CEO of Community Shares, the first thing I did after moving into my new office was to write the following quote where I could see it each day: "What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?"

It reminds me to ask myself what we, as an organization, would do if there were no challenges - and then we do that very thing in spite of them. Rather than take on the enormity and full burden of the challenge, we look at each step in its true proportion, and let every test reveal its bearable weight. Accomplishing even the smallest victories along the way builds our mettle, motivation, and momentum.

Over the six and a half years I've been with Community Shares, the most important thing I've learned is: when we work together, we cannot fail. In 2009, Community Shares remained steady in our commitments, hopeful in our goals, and comforted knowing we are a part of a caring community.

And that is my final message to share with you tonight – to never forget to celebrate the small victories. Push back the creeping uncertainties and celebrate your abundance. Give gratefully and receive with joy.

A fond memory came back to me recently that I'd like to share. Two years ago I met my family in Seattle and we made our annual drive to Idaho to spend Christmas with my mother's family. We gather there each year and typically make our Christmas Eve get-together open to family and friends and anyone who needs a place to celebrate home. Some years my aunt puts an advertisement in the paper that anyone who needs a place for Christmas is welcome to join us.

On Christmas morning we wake up and sit around in our pajamas and open gifts. My nephew, Will, was three years old at the time of this memory and was enjoying his role as family elf. He picked up the gifts and toddled them over to the correct person. He kneeled next to the person as they opened their gift and, after they pulled out the sweater or CD, he would ask them

with that particular, wide-eyed seriousness known only to 3 year-olds, “Is it just what you always wanted?”

With a half smile, we each nodded solemnly. “Yes, yes it is.” With that, Will would turn to the group with his hands in the air, shaking with joy, and shout out with glee, “It’s just what she always wanted!” And he did this after every gift, each time a surprise, each time swept up in the joy of what it is to give and receive.

When times are difficult, it’s easy to lose touch with the joy of receiving. Our uncertainties cloud our eyes with what we might not have when we could instead clearly see gratefulness and hope.

Last week we received a gift from a friend of mine who has supported Community Shares for several years. When we were sending the letters requesting donations, I forgot that she had been laid off a few months before and was struggling to find a new job. She sent us not the amount we asked for but a \$10 gift and a note that said her unemployment was limiting her philanthropic dollars and she was so sorry that was all she could give.

When I saw her gift, I was so humbled. I realized I had directed all of my focus to the \$1.6 million dollar finish line of our annual budget. I’d lost sight of the beauty of each gift as personal and meaningful. And I remembered that Community Shares got where it is today by meeting each donor where they are with joy, and building a stronger community \$10 at a time. Well, my friend Julia is here tonight, and I’d like to take this opportunity to tell her that her \$10 gift, “It’s just what I always wanted. Thank you.”

Each of your gifts and contributions to Community Shares are just what we always wanted. Every dollar, every small choice, every decision to be brave enough to share. They’ve come together to form this grateful organization, to fill this room with celebration, and to build a more hopeful Colorado.

Join me tonight in celebrating all that we have and all that you’ve shared with us this last year. Push back any uncertainties and celebrate our abundance. Because we are here, we are united, and together, we are so much bigger than ourselves.

Thank you for your support of Community Shares of Colorado.