

# ASPEN HOPE CENTER

*another year of responding, supporting and instilling HOPE*

## FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A community like  
no other

## HOPE IN A PANDEMIC

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The past year was one no human being will ever forget. 2020 shocked the globe and 2021 tested our strength and resilience, our relationships and patience, our beliefs, and our ability to hope for tomorrow. But, I believe in the human spirit. I believe that good will prevail. Why? Because of you!

In 2021, the Aspen Hope Center team answered more crisis calls than in any of our nearly 12 years. We educated more people than we ever could have imagined possible during times of isolation and quarantines. We started consulting with other communities so they could provide the same mobile crisis services as our community. We have seen an outpouring of support. To all of this I say - this valley is full of amazing people and THIS is an amazing place to call home!

Michelle Muething, LPC  
Executive Director



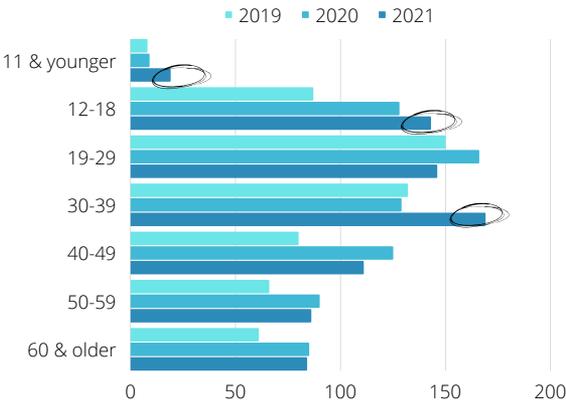
# HOPE IN A PANDEMIC

Most individuals would say that "life has its ups and downs." Some say, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." But what do people say about life in a pandemic? Life where restrictions and mandates can change by the day, or by the county or by city lines crossed? The increase in mental health needs has been witnessed by nearly everyone and no one is immune to struggles. In fact, most experts agree that we have yet to see the magnitude of the mental health fallout that will occur from this life-changing time. Through the "ups and downs" the Hope Center staff has tried to "make lemonade out of lemons." Staff found silver linings for individuals in pain and held out a hand so people knew they were not alone.



In 2021, Hope Center crisis clinicians served 1,085 new individuals. This amounted to a 15% increase over 2020 and a 26% increase from 2019. In looking at the ages of those who are seeking help or being brought in for crisis evaluations, we find the following trends:

♀ 622      ♂ 416      ♀♂ 12

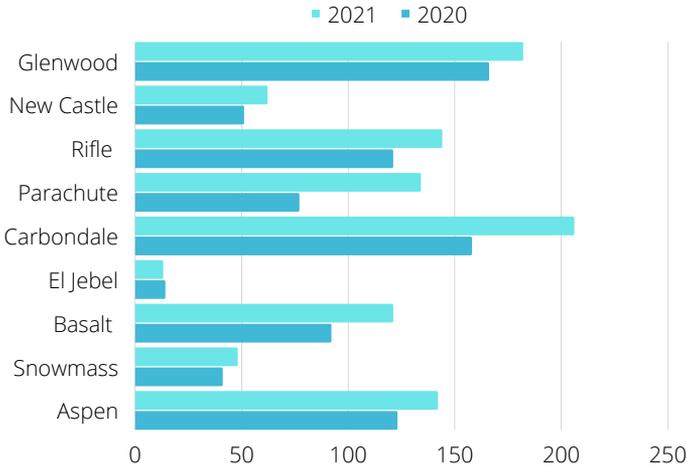


Note: The Aspen Hope Center runs a 24-hour HopeLine as well as crisis and co-response teams. Some individuals who call wish to withhold names and remain anonymous or they choose not to disclose any identifying information. Therefore the statistical report comes from those who have been in acute crisis directly connected to a crisis clinician with identifying data shown in this report. The numbers represent about half of those who contact the Hope Center each year.

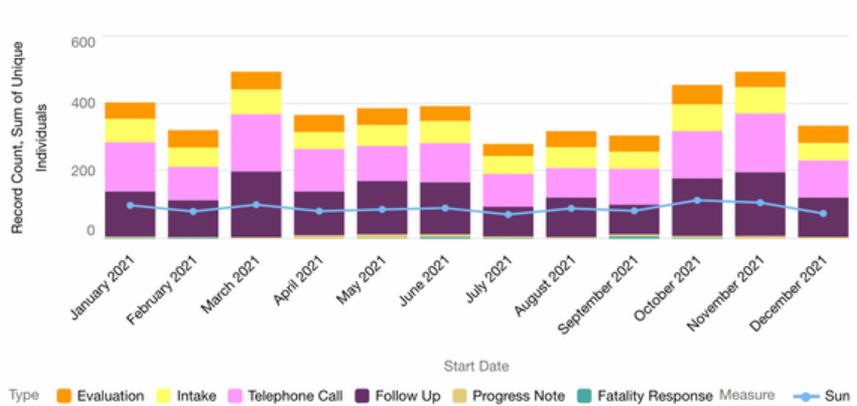
From 2019 to 2021, there was a 137% increase in crisis evaluations for children who were 11 and younger, a 64% increase in crisis assessments for adolescents between 12 and 18 years of age, and a 28% increase in evaluations for adults between the ages of 30 and 39. Of the 1,085 new clients the Hope Center staff had contact with in 2021, 144 identified as Hispanic, 486 identified as white, 45 identified as other and 410 are unknown.

# HOPE IN A PANDEMIC

As we enter 2022, the Aspen Hope Center's name and reputation for immediate access to high-quality services continue to spread. The number of individuals served from every town in our service area increased in 2021 over 2020.



The graph below shows the various types of interactions staff had each month with individuals in our community: High-risk crisis evaluations, crisis intakes, follow-ups made with clients, phone calls to check in with staff, etc. The blue dotted line denotes the number of new individuals seen each month compared to the overall number of encounters.



# SERVING THE VALLEY'S YOUTH

The Aspen Hope Center saw rapid and monumental expansion in the school-based mental health program in 2021. During the '20-'21 school year, four clinicians served four schools. By August of 2021, when the current school year began, the program had expanded to 12 clinicians in 12 schools. Between August 16 and December 17, 239 students were assisted.



The Basalt High School position was the first one launched in 2011, and Basalt High School and Basalt Middle School positions have been funded for the past three years by Eagle County 1A tax dollars. In 2021, Basalt Town Council voted to fully fund a position at Basalt Elementary School. Now each Basalt school has a full-time clinician, and lucky for the high school, they happen to get a bicultural clinician!



Roaring Fork High School has been the second longest-standing of the school programs. Beginning in 2014 and partially funded through the Town of Carbondale, the position at Roaring Fork High School has been a strong one and the clinician working in this school is also one of our school-based supervisors.



Excitement prevailed in Glenwood Springs as the high school received two school-based clinicians, one of whom is bicultural. Glenwood Springs Middle School also received a bilingual clinician. All three positions are funded through the School Health Professional Grant and partnership with the Roaring Fork School District (RE-1). Glenwood Springs Elementary and Sopris Elementary also have a clinician who shares time between the schools and serves the youngest of our Glenwood youth. The funding for this position is graciously provided by the City of Glenwood Springs.



Two Rivers Community School, a k-8 private school in Glenwood Springs, is a proud new addition to the Hope Center's school-based mental health program.



New for 2021 was a full-time clinician shared between Carbondale Community School and Aspen Community School. A bilingual alumni graduate of Aspen Community School itself now serves the school that once served her.



For the second year in a row, Aspen Hope Center has a full-time clinician serving the students in the Affective Needs program in Riverview School. A unique position that focuses specifically on students with developmental disabilities or high behavioral needs, this position is also funded in partnership with the Roaring Fork School District (RE-1) and the School Health Professional Grant.

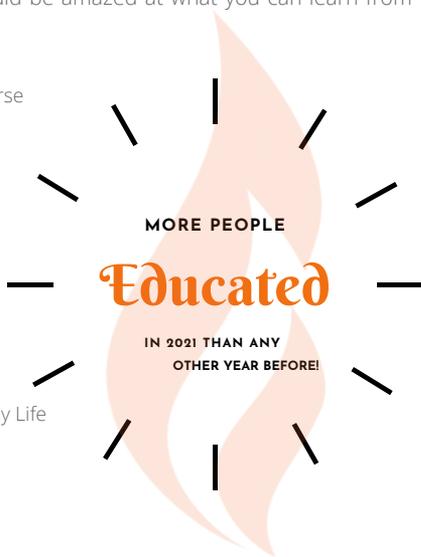
# BREAKING DOWN WALLS THROUGH EDUCATION AND OUTREACH



Between the ups and downs of mask mandates and maximum number of people allowed to gather indoors, the Aspen Hope Center managed to train more than **1,500** people in the Roaring Fork Valley in 2021.

Sonja Linman joined the Aspen Hope Center team in the summer with a passion and gift to teach. She has a M.Ed in Curriculum Development and Assessment, 30 years of teaching and working in the Roaring Fork School District, is a Certified Addictions Counselor and is known by many as the "teen whisperer." You would be amazed at what you can learn from Sonja.

- 💡 *We Can Talk*, a QPR Suicide Awareness Course
- 💡 Dealing with Difficult Behaviors
- 💡 Youth Mental Health First Aid
- 💡 Mental Health First Aid
- 💡 Parent Coffee Chat
- 💡 Mental Wellness in a Post-COVID World
- 💡 National Night Out Presentation
- 💡 When We Feel Fear
- 💡 DeStress & Build New Patterns for a Healthy Life



*We Can Talk* was the mental health campaign slogan and turned to course title, used on by hundreds of community members in 2015. After many focus groups and listening sessions, *We Can Talk* was pushed out valley-wide and remains stronger than ever. In 2021, Michelle Muething and Sonja Linman trained 20 new individuals on the foundation for teaching *We Can Talk*, a QPR-based suicide-awareness program. Most of the 20 new trainers were embedded in a school system and strive to reach as many of our youth as possible and empower them to speak up and find hope!



The Aspen Hope Center is proud to be partnering with Aspen School District to provide *We Can Talk* classes to all 5th through 12th graders. Groups began with staff in the fall and classes for students are taking place between January and May of 2022.

# CONSULTING & TRAINING

*A new endeavor*

In 2021, the Aspen Hope Center Board decided to add Consulting & Training to the pillars of service that are provided by the agency. This decision came out of the agency receiving multiple requests to help other communities stand up mobile crisis and co-response teams: First, in 2018, the expansion of the Hope Center's crisis team into the Eagle River Valley and subsequent support given for them to form their own board and have independent 501c3 status. Second, the consulting and training requested by Gunnison County stakeholders to create an independent mobile crisis team, apart from the area's community mental health center. Lastly, the requests for informational meetings and presentations from Mesa, San Miguel and other counties on the Aspen Hope Center model, crisis training, and success in programming.

In January of 2021, The Hope Center, Eagle River Valley, stood under a new Eagle County board and continued the crisis and school-based services that had been so successful for two years. Eagle Valley Behavioral Health was granted the Community Mental Health Center designation for Eagle County in the fall of 2021 and Hope Center, Eagle River Valley shifted to become Your Hope Center in January 2022. This first attempt at replication and expansion into another county was a tremendous accomplishment, and the staff and board of the Aspen Hope Center are so proud and wish Eagle Valley Behavioral Health and Your Hope Center all the success for the road ahead!



GUNNISON VALLEY HEALTH

In 2020 Gunnison County requested help in forming a mobile crisis and co-response team, independent from the mental health center. After nearly a year of community meetings, interviews, hiring new staff and creating policies and procedures, Gunnison Valley Health took on the new role as the crisis team administrator and obtained the state contract for mobile crisis in Gunnison County. The partnership formed with Gunnison Valley first responders, EMS and Gunnison Valley Health has been one of the most rewarding partnerships outside of the Roaring Fork Valley. The excitement for this new service in their area is overwhelming!

Over the past three years, the Aspen Hope Center has been honored to be asked for guidance by other community leaders. With each new partnership and relationship formed comes teaching, but also learning about other areas of our beautiful state. Though we may have different geographical landscapes and slight differentiation in our community make-ups, we are all so similar at heart and want only the best for the communities within which we all live.

# STORIES FROM THOSE WHO FOUND HOPE

I wanted to send a note of gratitude to two of your crisis clinicians, Mia and Tara. A few weeks ago, my best friend's husband drowned in a kayaking accident on the Crystal, just a week after their wedding. Not unexpectedly, she was a mess, openly suicidal and barely functioning. We, her girlfriends and his close friends, dropped everything to be there. Mia and Tara dropped in and formed an incredible net of support, care and kindness. There had to be 15 of us there, and they did a beautiful job of reacting compassionately to everyone's individual response. They fed us, made sure we didn't get dehydrated, collected everyone's personal information so as to contact them later, escorted me to Jess and Chason's home to collect any weapons available for self-harm, and were just all around incredible.

They were absolutely incredible at helping all of us both help Jess through the heinous pain but also remember to take care of ourselves. I was brought to tears knowing that this service exists both for my best friend, the new widow, but also for everyone else in the region, who suffers seemingly insurmountable loss.

With deep gratitude,  
Sydney

As the Sheriff of Garfield County, I have been involved in many conversations about the increasing mental health crisis, but I never thought a co-responder program was viable. I was wrong! Michelle Muething and her team at Aspen Hope Center have been providing the Sheriff's Office and our community a great alternative to a law enforcement response to cases that shouldn't require law enforcement! They are quick to respond, follow up and have taught us so much about crisis intervention. We still have a long way to go to with mental health issues, but this program has been the fuel to get us started.

Many Thanks,  
Lou Vallario, Sheriff Garfield County

During a very hard time when we had a crisis with one of our own, I was appreciative that the counselor responded so fast to the situation. We all feared the worst because of past problems. Our friend was angry at us for calling for help and almost left, believing that he would be thrown in a hospital. The counselor spent more than two hours talking with him and with all of us. We were stunned at how much time was put into planning and arranging appointments and check-ins - even with us!! In the end, our friend did not go to the hospital. He started therapy with Patti at the Hope Center the next day and for the first time he feels there is hope. What a cool name for an agency.

Thank you,  
Jeff, Aspen Skiing Company

# MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Thank you to our generous supporters who gave us a place to serve others:

The Esrick Family  
Adam and Melony Lewis  
Blanca and Cavanaugh O'Leary  
Gordon and Elaine Gerson  
Nancy Swift Furlotti, Ph.D.  
Robert and Marilyn House  
Tom and Sallie Bernard,  
in memory of Jamie Bernard  
Bill and Suzanne Gooch  
Stephen and Judith Wertheimer  
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Craig and Mariah Morris  
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Steven and Clare Shane  
Jessica Fullerton  
Aspen Elks Lodge #224  
Emily Ransford  
Jim Geib  
David Gitlitz  
Sam Augustine  
Harriett Gold

Two donors chose to remain anonymous and gave a total of more than \$300,000 in honor of Executive Director, Michelle Muething and Board President, Sandy Iglehart.

Everyone knows what happened with property values in our valley in 2021, and the gem of a location that the Aspen Hope Center calls home was eyed by many. In March, during a brief and unexpected six-minute phone call with the landlord, the Hope Center was thrust into a capital campaign. Words cannot explain the gratitude held for the 15 people who contributed more than 80% of the overall cost. And with some reserve funding, the space was paid off on December 11. The Aspen Hope Center now has a permanent place in downtown Basalt, a town that has had our hearts for many years and holds amazing partnerships. It provides a warm and inviting space for staff and clients alike. We are proud to be residents of Eagle County and look forward to serving the Roaring Fork Valley for many years to come!

Thank you to the Aspen Hope Center Board of Directors who helped support this initiative and have been unwavering in their overall dedication to the agency and staff:

Sandy Iglehart, Board President  
Lady Fuller, Board Secretary  
Jim Geib, Board Treasurer

Board Members  
Cavanaugh O'Leary  
Jim Laing  
Steven Esrick  
Rabbi Mendel Mintz  
Nancy VanDeMark  
Sallie Bernard  
Jonathan Shamis

# MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS



## BUILDING CAPACITY, SECURING INFRASTRUCTURE

Many agencies have a plethora of administrators keeping them afloat. For 11 years Aspen Hope Center functioned with one sole administrator, Executive Director, Michelle Muething. A licensed therapist by trade, Michelle vowed to put all that came into the front line work. Now, a \$2.3 million agency, the Hope Center brought in Program Director Sarah Fedishen and Financial Director Shanda Grey in 2021 to provide support, and hired a Operations Director Natasha Lucero-Conklin in 2022. The stronger the administrative infrastructure, the stronger and broader the service line in the community can be.



Sarah Fedishen, LAC, LPCC  
Program Director



Shanda Grey  
Finance Director



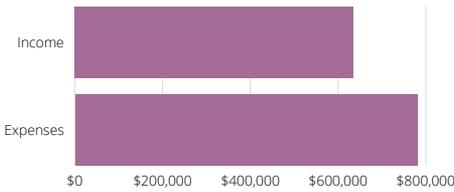
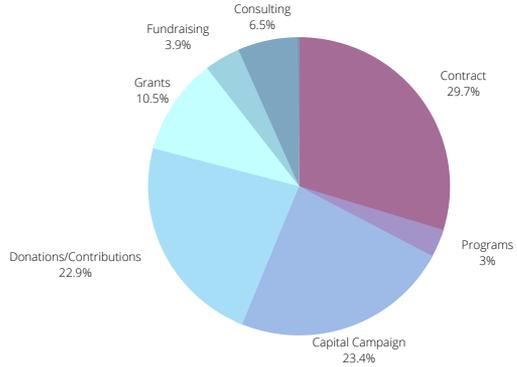
Natasha Lucero-Conklin  
Operations Director



For more than 10 years, the Aspen Hope Center has served our valley's youth by having a clinician placed in a few of our mid-valley schools. Starting in the spring of 2011, the first school-based clinician was placed in Basalt High School, the second in Roaring Fork High School and the third in Carbondale Community School. Over the years, support was also provided to Ross Montessori, Bridges High School and Yampah Mountain High School, in the form of counseling on site a few hours a week. In 2021, with much hard work and strong partnerships in the community, four school clinicians tripled to 12. On page four, you can read about the schools who now have a full-time, dedicated clinician for their students. Each school position requires anywhere from \$78,000 to \$95,000 to fully cover all aspects of a clinician's work, materials, and supervision. These are positions the Hope Center is extremely proud of and more schools are poised to join this effort in 2022!

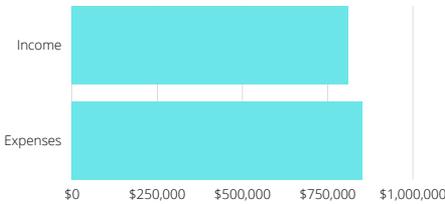
# NUMBERS TELL THE STORY

In 2021, the Aspen Hope Center had a very unique financial picture. Events that typically took place annually (The Fashion Show and Sneak A Peak) were not held, a capital campaign was initiated overnight and a celebratory event was put together despite Covid. The Aspen Hope Center holds steady with 30% of its revenue coming from state and local contracts and 25% income stemming from individual or business donations. Program income flows from a small amount of therapy and education provided to the community.



## Crisis Work

The Aspen Hope Center has been providing crisis services for more than 11 years and it has only been in the last three years that crisis has pulled in any significant revenue. In 2021, \$634,800 was received for crisis services through state and local contracts and local grants. This income offset the expenses for crisis totaling more than \$780,000.

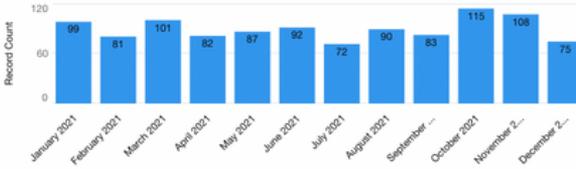


## School Work

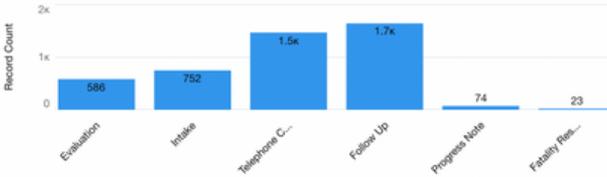
In 2021, the Aspen Hope Center significantly expanded the school-based mental health program, thanks to the City of Glenwood Springs and additional grant money secured by the Roaring Fork School District. By August of 2021, four clinicians had grown to 12 clinicians and a \$385,000 budget spiked to \$810,000.

# NUMBERS TELL THE STORY

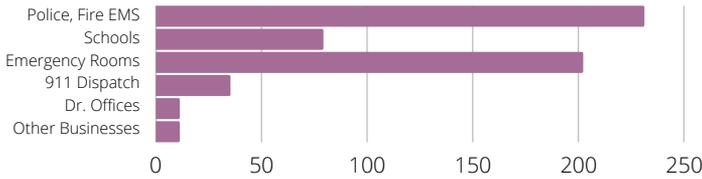
In 2021, October proved to be the busiest month for crisis calls.



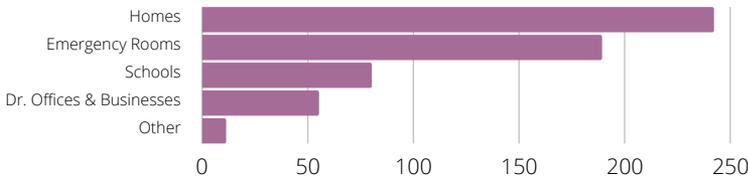
With 586 major high-risk crisis assessments and 752 crisis intakes, more than 3,000 follow-ups were done to make sure people did not fall through the cracks. These calls were follow up where the clinician called to check in on the person evaluated or a friend or loved one who was part of the assessment. The phone calls are clients and loved ones who call to follow up with the Hope Center. A clinician responded to 23 fatality calls to support survivors of all kinds -- friends and family members, wait staff, tow-truck drivers, neighbors, our local first responders and more. If there is a newspaper headline detailing a community tragedy, you can assume the Hope Center is in the backdrop supporting those in need.



The Aspen Hope Center was created to serve the community when in crisis and many of those calls came from community partners who rely on an immediate response. Below are the top six partners who called for assistance.



Below shows the locations clinicians responded to when called. Most often client homes are the preferred choice, but many times people walk into a hospital and need care. The goal is to reduce the number of people presenting to the emergency room for mental health assistance and, in 2022, we aim to increase marketing in the community to help.





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24-hour Hopeline: 970-925-5858