



# CONNECTIONS

Challenge Barriers. Build Independence.

# ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020

“In a year where the whole world changed and work changed. I came out of 2020 knowing that we at Connections for Independent Living found a new way to describe our work on behalf of those with disabilities, “fierce compassion.” It became critical in this pandemic to make the voices and needs of those who were isolated and deeply marginalized heard loud and clear. People’s lives depended on us translating, communicating, listening and relaying information. We distributed food, masks, rent deposit assistance, technology, vaccines and more. We assisted 28 percent more people in our seven-county region than ever before.

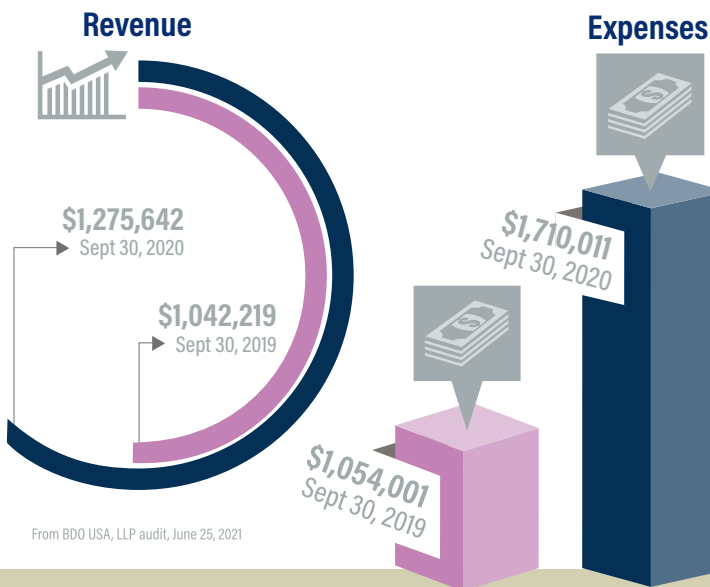


2021 is already proving bigger and busier and we must show up with that fierce compassion. We are ready to take on any challenge, advocate for any person with disability and remember all who we lost in these past 18 months. Celebrate and remember with us on September 17, 2021 and help us look forward to a better future for all of Northeastern Colorado.

*Rochelle Mitchell-Miller*  
July 2021

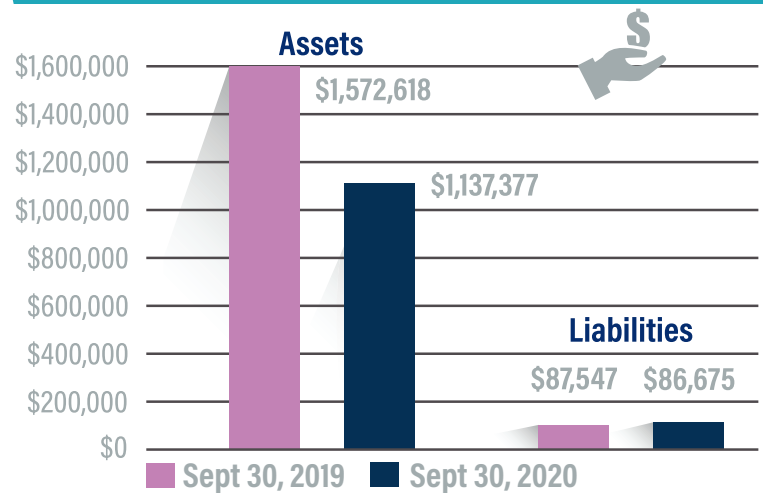
## Rochelle Mitchell-Miller Joins Connections

Rochelle Mitchell-Miller joined Connections as Executive Director in April 2020 after serving several months as Interim Director. A former Chief Executive Officer for the Douglas County Community Foundation, and Director for the High Plains Library District Foundation, Rochelle brings the professional background and experience the board was seeking to guide Connections in the coming years.



## Connections Programs

Serving seven northeastern Colorado counties from Weld east to the Kansas and Nebraska borders, Connections offers individuals who live with disabling conditions assistance and guidance. Coloradans come to Connections seeking guidance for living as valued, independent community members. Connections is one of the northeastern Colorado’s leading providers of Housing Choice Vouchers from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Division of Housing, and regularly provides assistance to individuals of all ages. The Connections Transitions program guides individuals who are moving from assisted living facilities to living independently in their own homes. Connections Interpreting provides American Sign Language interpreting for business and consumer clients throughout northern Colorado.



## Connections Pandemic Response

In March 2020, Connections transitioned to at-home remote services due to the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. Equipment was purchased for team members, important information gathered, and business practices implemented to allow all services for consumers to continue without interruption. Working remotely, team members reached out to all registered consumers to check on their welfare, and to provide assistance in services. Connections also implemented remote video for American Sign Language interpreting for deaf and hard-of-hearing customers. We continue to adjust our services accordingly as the pandemic changes.

## Connections Development

Connections brought in a Director of Communications in August 2020 to guide and manage internal communications between team members, and external communications with the general public. Creation of modern branding and identity art for Connections, along with a new website, was undertaken. A review and strengthening of the organization’s communications and messaging through a bi-monthly newsletter, outgoing email communications, and social media postings was also achieved.



Jessica Agur of Denver donated this van to Connections in 2020 through an organization called Special Kids Fun Inc.

## Connections Outreach

Throughout the organization’s history, Connections has mostly served consumers in the greater Greeley region. Recognizing this proximity predisposition, Connections leadership in 2020 began actions to increase public awareness of the organization, to better provide assistance and guidance to potential consumers throughout the seven-county service region. This process included hiring new team members working remote from the Greeley offices. This allows them to travel to events, meetings, and facilities to increase knowledge of Connections and the organization’s programs.





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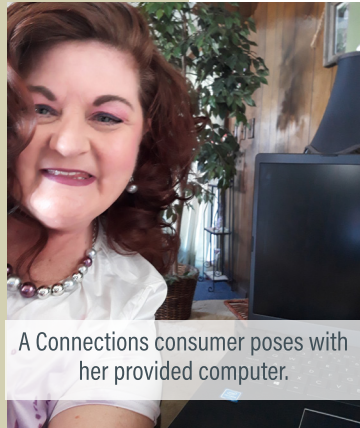
Challenge Barriers. Build Independence.

Connections challenges barriers, both physical and attitudinal, which restrict the rights and personal development opportunities of people with disabilities. Our mission is to promote the full inclusion and integration of people who live with all types of disabilities into all levels of society. Our staff and board of directors include multiple persons who live with disabilities; through personal knowledge and experience, we are effective in promoting independent living and empowerment.

**Connections Transportation.** Connections acquired two corporate vehicles for use in official organization duties during the 2019 to 2020 period. These vehicles are used by our organization for transportation of consumers and staff to programs and events.



**Technology Assistance.** In the third and fourth quarters of 2020, Connections received federal CARES Act funding allowing the purchase and distribution of notebook computers to registered northeastern Colorado consumers. These computers were Internet-ready, allowing recipients to access virtual medical appointments, join in Connections peer-support groups, order prescriptions and medical equipment, and participate in remote learning while maintaining safety at home during the pandemic.



A Connections consumer poses with her provided computer.

**Connections Cares.** Recognizing the ongoing necessity to directly provide in-person services to consumers, Connections created the Connections Cares program in the third quarter of 2020. The program provided limited in-person outdoor services at the Connections offices in Greeley, including distribution of nutritious pantry food boxes containing several food staples. Team member Jessica unloads a new shipment of food boxes that were provided to qualified individuals at no cost.



A contestant at the 2019 Connections Got Talent competition.

**Connections Got Talent.** In late 2019, Connections hosted a talent show and fundraiser at Greeley's Millennium Event Center. This program was well-supported by area businesses, and included several talented performers. Funds raised through the accompanying silent auction were applied to ongoing Connections programs.



## Connections Outreach.

Connections team members like Kevin reach out through community events, meetings, and gatherings in northeastern Colorado. This outreach program helps to increase community awareness of our organization, and our various ongoing services and programs that benefit and assist persons who live with disabling conditions.