

## Center for Hope marking one-year anniversary

GORDAN THIBEDEAU • APRIL 19, 2010 • FORT COLLINS COLORADOAN

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It's hard for me to believe that a year has gone by since we opened the doors of the Sister Mary Alice Murphy Center for Hope.

It seemed like it took an eternity to build, and in the blink of an eye, a year has gone by; what a remarkable year it has been.

We had originally thought we would serve perhaps as many as 25 to 35 homeless or near-homeless individuals and families per day. We were shocked to find we served between 80 and 100 people each day.

We opened the center just as the full effects of the recession were being felt here in Larimer County - it's good news we opened when we did.

There were many who needed help in our community this past year.

I want to share with you some statistics that help put a face on those who sought services at the center:

- > Almost 4,000 people sought services.
- > 32 percent were 18 years old or younger.
- > 46 percent were female.
- > 52 percent came in as a family.
- > 82 percent were white.
- > Overall visits to the center: 19,056.

These statistics might change some of our preconceived notions of the people who are homeless or near homeless in Fort Collins and Loveland.

The center offers case management, job counseling, and there are 12 nonprofit agencies that work collaboratively to offer services.

For the first time in Larimer County, families and individuals can access the services they need in one place.

The Center for Hope has made remarkable achievements in one year. The center continues to receive calls from members of other communities around the country asking how they, too, can create a place like the Sister Mary Alice Murphy Center for Hope.

Please, join me in congratulating the Center for Hope and all of the contributing agencies and organizations on a job well done.

**Gordan Thibedeau is president and CEO of United Way of Larimer County. Reach him at (970) 407-7000. Visit United Way of Larimer County at [www.uwaylc.org](http://www.uwaylc.org).**