

Jerri Schmitz

Her Legacy: Founder of the Matthews House

Though she is now retired, Jerri Schmitz will forever be remembered as the founder of The Matthews House, which opened its doors to older teens aging out of foster care in 2006 in Larimer County. Jerri teamed up with a licensed social worker friend to empower new adults to get the skills, help, and shelter they need to create stable lives for themselves.

Jerri's team at The Matthews house uses a trauma-informed approach to working with clients. She wants to find the root cause of a situation, not just treat the obvious symptoms. The Matthews House's programs focus on physical/mental health, housing, education, employment, and life skills. Jerri has also made it a priority for employees to focus on relationships; it's very important for people to know that they matter, to themselves and to others, so they don't give up.

Jerri's remarkable mission began in 2003 when she met a young man in Old Town Fort Collins who had aged out of foster care and was living on the streets because he no longer had resources from the state. Jerri knew she had to do something. Within two years, The Matthews House was incorporated

The Matthews House has reached thousands of formerly at-risk teens, but Jerri and the team went further. They realized that if families could be helped earlier, many children might never be placed in foster care to begin with and would never need to stay in The Matthews House. They implemented new programs focusing on family outreach to prevent such situations, and have been able to reach thousands of families, children, and later teens aging out of foster care over the years.

Jerri retired after 14 years with The Matthews House, but she leaves behind a legacy of love and building trust in The Matthews House and in the community she built around it.

“Without The Matthews House I would probably be living in a car, addicted to drugs, without my children or a future to look forward to. Instead we live as a family in a loving home and have an amazing future ahead of us. I am a survivor.” – Parent Participant

Written by Melissa Allbrandt, Archivist, Editor, and Writer