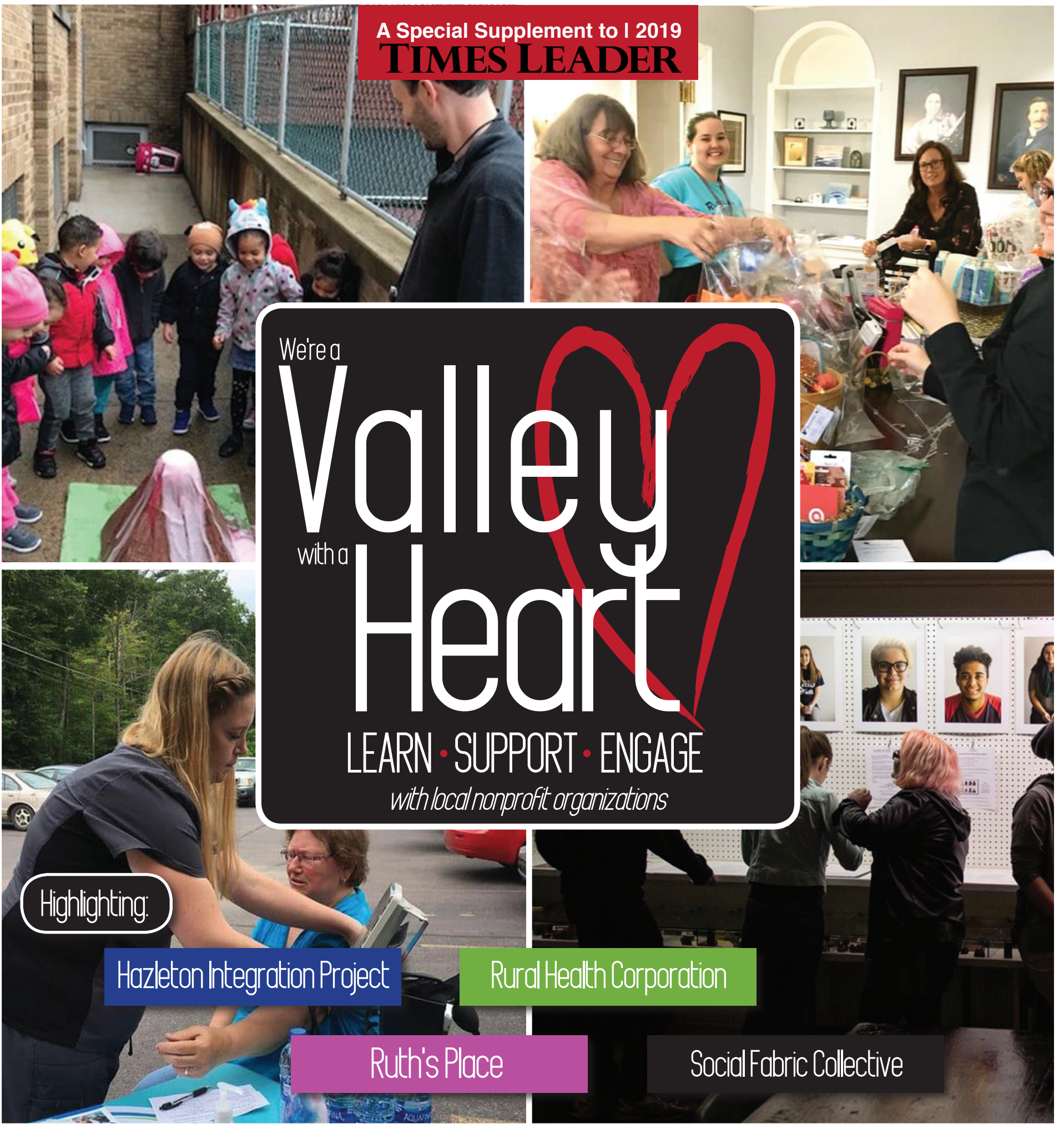


A Special Supplement to | 2019
TIMES LEADER



We're a

Valley Heart

with a

LEARN • SUPPORT • ENGAGE

with local nonprofit organizations

Highlighting:

Hazleton Integration Project

Rural Health Corporation

Ruth's Place

Social Fabric Collective

Thanks for Giving

Charles M. Barber
President and CEO of The Luzerne Foundation

December is a magical time of year, particularly when you consider how the generosity of giving makes this season merry and bright. From the thoughtful presents we exchange with family and friends, to the charitable causes we ardently support, this is the time of year when caring and kindness can seem even more abundant than usual. When you reflect on generosity and giving, you may be thinking primarily about financial or tangible gifts, but there are other alternatives as well for showing your care and compassion. I often think about giving in terms of sharing your time and talent, not just treasure. For this reason, I firmly believe that anyone, can be a philanthropist.

Each of us has resources to share that can go well beyond making a one-time donation to a worthy cause. A valuable way that you can help strengthen your community is by investing your time and talent in the projects that are closest to your heart. Whether you attend a community cleanup, spend time with those who could use a little company, or take time to read to local children, there are countless ways to make a positive impact. Many nonprofit organizations hold regular events, raffles, and activities which can only be successful

if community members choose to become involved. Your participation in local events is vital to their continued success and to benefiting this area.

A great way to stay on top of upcoming events is by visiting the Times Leader's event calendar at timesleader.com/calendar. This resource can help you to connect upcoming events in which you may be interested in volunteering. Additionally, a convenient way to announce opportunities for community engagement is by visiting www.luzfdn.org/submit-an-event/ to share nonprofit events with the wider Northeastern Pennsylvania community. We can help spread the word about how others can participate in your nonprofit's activities.

Above all, it is essential to remember that staying involved on a regular basis is critical when it comes to donating your time and talent. Volunteering for a specific event at this time of year is a great start, but maintaining continued involvement with the nonprofit of your choice goes a long way. These organizations depend year-round upon the generous support of those who offer their time to organize events and fundraisers. Getting to a local event is an important first step in determining which organizations inspire your participation.

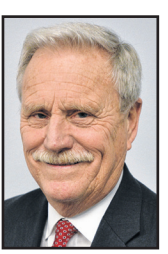
As the holidays wind down and you begin to mull over your New



A Note from our Publisher

Mike Murray
Publisher, Times Leader
Media Group

The season of joy and giving is upon us but let there be no doubt many in our area are much less fortunate than others. This is the time of the year that our non-profit organizations and the many who volunteer, give their time to help make the holiday season brighter for those individuals and families.



These organizations can only provide this help through your continued contributions. Take the time this season to remember them and remember all they do for the communities they serve.

Check out today's section on some of those special organizations. Check out the calendar of what's coming up with dates and times. Thank you for reading and thank you in advance for any help you might provide. Have a very safe and joyous holiday season.

Year's resolutions, consider making charitable involvement part of your plans for 2020. Whether you choose to make a recurring gift to the nonprofit or community foundation of your choice, or decide to make an ongoing time commitment to a local nonprofit, your participation is essential to bettering your community. This year, don't just think about how your community can improve, be part of the movement to give back. You can make a lasting difference in your community and in someone's life.

If this series has inspired you to donate your time, talent, or treasure to causes in Northeastern Pennsylvania, we'd love to hear about it! Please send your stories of community engagement to info@luzfdn.org. We may even mention you on our website, in our newsletter, or in an upcoming edition of Valley with a Heart!

Here for good.



Nonprofit Spotlight — Hazleton Integration Project



The Hazleton Integration Project's (HIP) mission is simple but powerful: to unite people of any and all cultures in the Hazleton community, and to provide opportunities for the economically disadvantaged. One of the project's co-founders, Joe Maddon, is a native to Hazleton, and best-known as the former manager of the Chicago Cubs, leading the team to their first World Series victory since 1908. President of the HIP board of directors, Bob Curry, is another of the project's co-founders, alongside his wife Elaine and Maddon's wife, Jaye. The four



Robert Curry
Executive Director

had first considered the idea of an initiative to foster a greater sense of unity in Hazleton back in 2010; by the end of 2011, they were raising money. By mid-2013, they had purchased a building, now known as the Hazleton One Community Center.

"It's pretty extraordinary," Curry remarked, thinking back on the origins of the project and how far it has come. He continued, "We felt that if we could find ways to keep kids off the street after school and during the summer, we'd be doing such good for the community." The project's primary concern is the operation of the Hazleton One Community Center, located on 255 East 4th Street in Hazleton. The center's signature programs revolve around education. Curry commented, "We operate a pre-K program which is led by bilingual teachers, and we offer an afterschool program for kids from kindergarten through grade 8; we have about 100 kids in that program." In addition, the center also strives to provide artistic and cultural outlets for the people it services, offering classes on citizenship, cooking, dance, drama, and more. Sports programs are also offered, including their newly-formed girls-only basketball league starting up in March of 2020.

HIP emphasizes the utility and affordability of all of its programs. Curry stated, "Kids are fed every single day. Our after-school program is 10 dollars a week. Our summer camp is a full day camp with meals: 25 bucks a week. We try to make it affordable for every family, and even if they can't afford it, a child is never turned away, and we offer scholarships."

Since its founding, HIP has been recognized nationally for its efforts toward promoting cultural unity and understanding. In 2018, The Atlantic named HIP a winner of its 3rd annual Renewal Awards, for finding creative, sustainable ways to bring positive change to its community. The Hazleton-based organization stood amongst co-winners based in cities like New Orleans, Memphis, and Austin, which dwarf Hazleton in population and national name recognition, but as Curry said, "Our story has gone coast to coast; it resonates with the immigration conversation."

Curry had some parting words for anyone who might doubt the moral character of the region: "Northeast PA frequently gets a bad rap in the press; people use words like 'hardscrabble' and 'coal cracker.' If that's your story, you're missing the point. People in northeast PA have the greatest hearts around: that is a fact." To donate and learn more about HIP and volunteering opportunities, visit their website at hip1.org.

More Info:

- 570-861-8081
- hip1.org

Hazleton Integration Project Photos



Nonprofit Spotlight — Rural Health Corporation of Northeastern PA



Ever since its founding in 1971, Rural Health Corporation (RHC) of Northeast Pennsylvania has endeavored to provide comprehensive, quality medical and dental care to the rural communities of Luzerne and Wyoming Counties. Formed in response to the difficulties that many rural residents faced in accessing health care, RHC now operates seven health care centers throughout the area. Initially consisting of five family practice health centers in the 1970s, (three of which also providing dental care,) RHC has since expanded to a specialized pediatric site in Edwardsville and a clinic in Wilkes-Barre designed to help the area's homeless population. Their original five centers are located in Freeland, Shickshinny, and Black Creek, Exeter, and Monroe Townships.



Tiffany L. Tankalavage
Executive Director

President and CEO of RHC since 2017, Tiffany Tankalavage, noted that RHC maintains a special and powerful position on the healthcare spectrum. "Since we're federally qualified, we can offer discounts to patients," Tankalavage said. She continued, "Anybody can literally walk through the door, and if they can't pay or can only pay a little bit, we can still help." RHC offers sliding fee discounts based on yearly income, and a full chart listing each tier of discount can be accessed on their website, rhcnepa.com.

Mary Beth Sokach, Medical Director at RHC and Center Director of the organization's Exeter Township Health Center, has worked with the corporation since 1997, and she couldn't imagine working anywhere else. "It's very gratifying," Sokach said, "because [RHC] allows me to be the type of doctor that I want to be. I'm able to provide services to people regardless of their ability to pay, providing in an area of greatest need." Reflecting on the prevalence of the subject of healthcare in the national conversation, Sokach remarked, "There is a significant population of people who need coverage, people who can't afford it, or choose not to purchase it. Preventative medicine is the crux of what we should be doing to keep our population healthy." She continued, "We can thankfully provide that type of preventative care even for people who can't afford insurance. I can discount my services, and I can give free services in some instances or get them written off because we've received grant status."

More Info:

- 570-825-8741
- rhcnepa.com

"We're close to home, we have quality physicians available all the time, and we're held to a higher level of quality care, whether it's medical, dental, pharmaceutical, pediatric, or family planning," Tankalavage said. RHC also plans to expand to a new location in Hazleton in January of 2020. You can donate via check written out to Rural Health Corporation, and you can learn more about RHC's services and their several locations at their website, rhcnepa.com.

Rural Health Corporation of Northeastern PA



Nonprofit Spotlight — Ruth's Place



Founded in a basement of the United Methodist Church in 2003, Ruth's Place has transformed into a beacon of hope for women throughout Luzerne County. Initially, the women's shelter was open for overnight hours during the winter. "Eventually it developed more structure and expanded to be open all year-round, 24/7," said Executive Director Crystal Kotlowski, who started working with Ruth's Place as an intern eight years ago. Today, the shelter operates from its current location at 425 North Pennsylvania Avenue in Wilkes-Barre and in July of 2013, the shelter merged with Volunteers of America Pennsylvania.

As the only emergency shelter for homeless women in Luzerne County, Ruth's Place strives to provide quality, temporary shelter for women in need. Ruth's Place's approach to homelessness abides by the "Housing First" model, which seeks to place homeless individuals into permanent housing as quickly and directly as possible. In doing so, the staff at Ruth's Place provides case management and supportive services for each woman staying at the shelter. Kotlowski commented, "There's not a 'one size fits all' housing solution for every woman, so our case management is very individualized and intensive." The shelter's supportive services also, for example, help women repair interpersonal relationships and provide income-related counsel, like helping women with disabilities obtain Social Security benefits.

In addition, the shelter offers a variety of groups and programs, including art and writing classes and meditation groups. Perhaps an underreported aspect of the shelter is its ability to connect women who are undergoing a difficult and sometimes traumatic shared experience. "The homeless community is their own greatest resource," Kotlowski said. The sense of community fostered at the shelter—the bonds forged between clients—provide the women staying at Ruth's Place with not just the resources they need to improve their situation, but with listening ears. The communal and family-esque environment helps diminish feelings of isolation and loneliness: all-too-common sentiments that can arise for people experiencing homelessness. Thanks to its staff and inclusive community, Ruth's Place sees a 96% success rate in getting women to transitional/independent housing. "It takes a village," as Kotlowski said.

Ruth's Place is always in need of donations, as well as volunteers. Monetary donations can be made via visiting the Ruth's Place website at ruthsplace.com, or the Volunteers of America PA website, voapa.org. In addition, the shelter also accepts donations of items on its wish list: socks, toiletries, both perishable and non-perishable foods, etc. If you're able to provide any of these items, give the shelter a call at (570) 822-6817. For up-to-date information on events and fundraising, visit the Ruth's Place Facebook page.



Crystal Kotlowski
Executive Director

More Info:

- 570-822-6817
- ruthsplace.com

Ruth's Place Photos



Nonprofit Spotlight — Social Fabric Collective



They say a picture is worth a thousand words; Social Fabric Collective (SFC) believes it's worth even more than that. According to the organization, photos have the power to "open eyes, change minds, stir hearts, and spark movements," and SFC does everything in its power to give high school students the chance to express themselves through photography. The group was founded in 2015 by artist and teacher Jamie Smith, who had previously developed a series of photography workshops for adults in New York City. After relocating

to northeast Pennsylvania and upon realizing that a similar curriculum could give high school students the resources they need to excel as photographers, SFC was created.

"Giving a camera to a high school student helps them develop their personal vision, how they see their circumstances, what they're interested in, and how to photograph it," Smith said. SFC's application process is need-blind, so only a student's interest and motivation in their art is considered; inclusivity and diversity are significant components of the organization's mission. Regardless of economic status, every student in the program receives a scholarship and financial aid in some form. SFC also encourages students at any skill level to consider applying. To students considering submitting an application, Smith said, "Don't be intimidated; nobody knows everything. Everyone uses the same equipment and computer and software."

While SFC provides students with the tools and education they need, the organization prides itself on its often student-driven curriculum. Smith remarked, "Every semester, the first half is: 'Here's a camera, here's how to use it.' But after a couple of weeks, we say, 'Let's use this group to leverage their creative energy and ideas to benefit the community.'" Indeed, over SFC's eight semesters, classes have honed in on social issues and used their talents as a medium for depicting and discussing each subject, including the environment, food dignity, education, and cancer awareness. Most recently, SFC students have been exploring the topic of juvenile justice through the organization's "Changing the Narrative" project, which has focused on sharing the stories of incarcerated youths. "Sometimes we marginalize young people and don't really give them a platform," Smith said. SFC's goal with this project is to spread awareness of how young people are treated in juvenile detention centers across the country, and especially in Pennsylvania.

Regardless of what subject the curriculum focuses on each semester, SFC's core mission remains the same every year. Smith listed these goals: "Help the individual young person figure out who they are, instill power in them as a group, and lift the self-esteem of the region; the work our students do can become a model for other parts of the country." If you'd like to donate to SFC or learn more about applying for a scholarship, visit their website, socialfabriccollective.org.



Jamie Smith
Executive Director and Co-Founder

More Info:

- 570-613-2222
- socialfabriccollective.org

Social Fabric Collective Photos





SOCIAL FABRIC COLLECTION

Spring Scholarship Application

Free/on-line application:

www.socialfabriccollective.org/registration

- Open to any/all high school students in NEPa
- No experience is needed.
- All equipment is provided.
- Everyone receives a scholarship - the application will help you calculate the level of scholarship you can expect to receive if accepted in to the program *(based on need/family income)*.
- Applications review in the order they are received.
- Photo is taught by Executive Director, Jamie Smith Design is taught by Bohlin Cywinski Jackson Designer, Jenn Lema