

Featured Alumni - Colleen Church (PLC '94)

April 2019

Vice President of Programs - Caring for Colorado Foundation



Colleen Church (PLC '94) says her friends know her as someone who values relationships. She is seen as an organizer, planner of get-togethers, and a “do-er”. This care for others manifests itself in her career. She currently works as the Vice President of Programs for the Caring for Colorado Foundation, a state-wide foundation dedicated to improving the health of the people of Colorado.

Her career centers around efforts to promote community health, mental health, healthy children and youth and helping Colorado realize health equity. Over the past few years, Colleen’s focus has increasingly supported defending gains

made under the Affordable Care Act, promoting access to comprehensive reproductive health services and promoting investments in early childhood health. Colleen’s work involves listening to Colorado communities, leading a team of program officers, developing public policy priorities and directing investments in nonprofits throughout Colorado. Colleen says her work-days are never quite the same -- some days she could be traveling in Colorado to talk to and learn from different communities, developing new strategies, partnering with other foundations to influence stakeholders and celebrating the work and importance of Colorado’s nonprofit safety net. Colleen’s passion for her current career was something that she discovered over time. She recalls her initial plans, “For a while, I thought I was going to be a lawyer, but I had a PLC mentor say that a public policy route may be more of a match for me.” She explored this career path and went to the Woodrow Wilson School of Public Affairs at Princeton University for graduate school. Colleen’s first job out of graduate school was “an amazing opportunity to grow from my PLC/CU and graduate school training.” As a Program Developer for the Nurse-Family Partnership, Colleen became an advocate for maternal/child health, supported the passage of legislation in multiple states to expand home visitation programs and worked deeply with coalitions who wanted more for women, children and families in their communities.

Colleen says she looks back on her time in college fondly, and would not do much else differently other than potentially study a language. During her time at CU, Colleen was sat on the ethics committee for the university, volunteered for Boulder Safehouse, and participated in Greek life and honor societies. Among these extracurriculars, she dedicated a large part of her time to the PLC program. She participated on Student Staff as a 2nd Year CA and as a curriculum support specialist. She also served as the Program Director for two and a half years before graduate school.

Colleen’s biggest piece of advice to a First Year in the PLC program would be, “Value the array of people you meet because they will be your life-long friends and mentors. You will be exposed to so many new ideas, new corners of Colorado and new ways of thinking and being as a leader.” Having stayed in Colorado, Colleen finds that PLC connections are all around her in her personal and professional life.

Outside of her professional life, Colleen loves exploring Colorado and being outdoors. She spends her free time hiking, skiing, swimming and enjoying time with her husband, Ben, her two kids, Ian and Zoe, and a bunch of PLC friends.
