

In 1970, Lou Stitzel rallied the support of her neighbors to help keep a local family from being evicted. From that act of kindness grew the nonprofit organization Neighbor to Neighbor, which works to prevent homelessness and make homeownership more attainable through programs that focus on eviction prevention and navigating the affordable housing market in Larimer County.

“Lou Stitzel, our founder and first director, was very community-minded and she kept that family from becoming homeless. And that is exactly what we still do today,” said Kelly Evans, Neighbor to Neighbor’s executive director.

From frantic renters with an eviction notice in their hand facing a two-year wait list for affordable housing, to a young couple trying to figure out how to buy their first home, Neighbor to Neighbor provides individualized, case-by-case counseling and services to people of all income levels to help them achieve stable housing. Services are provided through main offices in Fort Collins and Loveland as well as several satellite locations.

Neighbor to Neighbor’s primary effort is its homelessness prevention program, which provides rental assistance and served 1,237 Larimer County households in 2018. “We distribute over \$225,000 in housing



# NEIGHBOR TO NEIGHBOR

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by rhea maze

assistance each year,” Evans says.

In addition to providing rental assistance, help navigating rental options, education programs for home ownership, and matching up clients in their homeshare program, Neighbor to Neighbor owns 132 affordable housing units in Larimer County that are provided to clients on a sliding-scale basis and include full-time resident support services by a social worker.

With the population rising across the Front Range, affordable housing continues to be a problem. “One-third of all local renters are paying more than half of their income on rent, and ideally all households would pay no more than a third of their income on rent,” Evans says. “And the average wage needed to afford a two-bedroom apartment in Larimer County is \$21.27 per hour.”

In the early 1900s, the concept of “rent parties” originated as a way for neighbors to help neighbors avoid eviction. They typically consisted of music, dancing, and “passing the hat” for donations. Neighbor to Neighbor encourages community members, businesses, churches, and other groups to help support the local housing crisis by hosting a rent party. “Rent parties are a great way for neighbors to gather and help neighbors and they are a lot of fun,” Evans says. “And for every \$300 raised, that’s one family that we can prevent eviction for.”

Neighbor to Neighbor also welcomes community participation in their volunteer programs and accepts donated items such as dressers and vacuums for their residents.

“Being part of a connection in someone’s life toward having a stable home is so rewarding,” Evans says.

“Because a stable home is the foundation for opportunity and success in other areas of life.”



## The Jaramillo Family



Photo courtesy of Neighbor to Neighbor

“ Before moving into housing with Neighbor to Neighbor, we were homeless. My son was struggling and missing school. Now, we have a stable place to live and my son is excelling. He is in advanced math and English, with straight As. ”

~ Bethany Jaramillo

## Neighbor to Neighbor’s 50<sup>th</sup> birthday bash

Saturday, July 27, 5-8:30 p.m.  
Carnegie Center for Creativity  
200 Mathews St., Fort Collins