

RITEVIEW

Spring/Summer



Kristin Uhler, Ph.D.

Kelley Family/Schlessman
Family Scottish Rite Masons
Chair in Childhood Language
Disorders

Looking Back with Gratitude, Looking Forward with Purpose

As summer settles over Colorado, I find myself pausing to reflect on what I am grateful for and what I have learned, and this season is no exception.

Thank you for the expertise and care you bring to families across our RiteCare and Treasure Chest Programs. It is rewarding to watch parents grow from finding services, to using therapy strategies at home, to advocating for their children. This issue shares a parent letter that captures that journey well.

Recently, Scott Bates, Secretary to the Board of the Scottish Rite Foundation, and I visited several of our RiteCare programs across the Western Slope. Meeting with directors and clinicians reminded us how much skill it takes to bring speech and language services to children in communities where care can be hard to find. We also saw challenges our programs share, including growing waitlists, limited clinical hours, and a changing early childhood funding landscape. We learned about the “wins” (see page 5) from the Bridging the Gap Grant and Treasure Chest kits are helping families keep learning going at home between visits.

Those same themes run through this issue. You will read how the Treasure Chest program in Grand Junction is sending books and materials home with families, and how the Children’s Speech & Reading Center helped 79 preschoolers make strong gains toward kindergarten readiness. AND very exciting introductions of new staff members to serve more children! Together with updates from partners across the state, these stories reflect what your support makes possible. This past year, we served more than 1,000 children across Colorado, and I look forward to all we will accomplish together in the months ahead.

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Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado

Celebrating 225 Years of the Scottish Rite

In 2026, the Scottish Rite marks its 225th anniversary. The modern Scottish Rite traces its origins to May 31, 1801, when the world's first Supreme Council was established in Charleston, South Carolina, creating an organized system of Masonic education that would spread across the country and around the world.

Growing with the Nation

Through the nineteenth century, the Scottish Rite spread across the country, forming local chapters known as Valleys. Today these Valleys continue to offer education, fellowship, and service in their communities.

In Colorado, the Valley of Denver celebrated the 100th anniversary of its landmark building near the State Capitol in 2025, a building that has served generations of Scottish Rite Masons.

Building on Freemasonry

The Scottish Rite is not a separate organization but an extension of Freemasonry, open to Master Masons who wish to continue their education through 29 additional degrees.

These degrees are not ranks. Each one offers a lesson or theme meant to encourage reflection and personal growth.

A Tradition of Philanthropy

Philanthropy has long defined the Scottish Rite. In 1953, members in Denver established the Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado to help children overcome speech, language, and literacy challenges.

That local effort became a national model. Colorado's success led the Supreme Council to adopt the RiteCare® Scottish Rite Childhood Language Program as its official philanthropy, and today RiteCare programs across the country serve thousands of children and families each year.

A Lasting Legacy

Over its history, the Scottish Rite has counted among its members many who made lasting contributions in government, science, business, and the arts, and who valued its emphasis on education, fellowship, and service.

Among its well-known members are Presidents Harry S. Truman and Gerald R. Ford, astronaut Buzz Aldrin, author Mark Twain, and entertainers Ernest Borgnine and Brad Paisley.

Looking Forward

The world of 2026 looks very different from that of 1801, yet the qualities that build strong communities remain timeless: honesty, compassion, responsibility, respect, and a commitment to the common good.

This anniversary is more than a celebration of longevity. It honors an organization that has stayed true to its founding principles while adapting to the needs of society, supported by millions of members who have given their time and resources to education, children's services, and their communities.

As we mark this milestone throughout 2026, we celebrate not only a remarkable history but an enduring commitment to education, philanthropy, and service for generations to come.



**Scott Bates, 33°,
Secretary to the Board of
Trustees, Scottish Rite
Foundation of Colorado**

Montrose Regional Health

Greetings from smokey Montrose. We are happy to report that the weather is not affecting our attendance and activities in the clinic. We are looking forward to our upcoming summer party on the afternoon of July 22, from 4-6 pm. Activities typically include the ever-popular face-painting station, the water slide, giant bubbles, corn hole and other games. The RiteCare Appraisal Committee gentlemen are in charge of handing out the ice cream and toppings and the clowns provide balloon creations. This is open to all children who are enrolled in therapy in our multi-disciplinary clinic and enjoyed by the SLPs, OTs and PTs on staff.



I would also like to introduce Emma Hansen, our newest member of the SLP team. Emma is working on her Clinical Fellowship. She graduated from Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver) in May of this year—2026. Some of her favorite things to work on with kiddos are phonological awareness, early language development, and using AAC. She also brings the love of and ability to work with bilingual children. Emma was married between graduation and beginning her new employment. What an adventure! She enjoys spending time outdoors and is looking forward to discovering all that Montrose has to offer. We are happy to have her as a member of our clinical family.

**Submitted by Patti Anderson CCC-SLP
RiteCare Program Director Montrose Regional Health**

University of Northern Colorado Updates

This spring and summer have been a productive and rewarding season for the UNC Speech-Language Pathology program. Our Treasure Chest program ran throughout the summer, serving many families across Northern Colorado with early language support delivered both in person and through telepractice. Our on-campus clinic likewise stayed busy, providing high-quality speech and language services to families from the surrounding community, many of whom qualified for Scottish Rite Foundation support that made their care possible.

None of this work happens without the continued partnership of the Scottish Rite Foundation, whose support sustains our clinical programs and the families they serve. That backing allows us to deliver care through our on-campus clinic and Treasure Chest program while training the next generation of clinicians.

Looking ahead, we are excited to share a significant milestone: this August, alongside our annual residential cohort, we will welcome the inaugural class of our Colorado Consortium. The Consortium is a new online master's program built specifically to confront Colorado's shortage of speech-language pathologists. Its students are speech-language pathology assistants (SLPAs) already working in communities across the state, many in rural and under-resourced areas that have long been underserved. By helping these practitioners earn their master's degrees without leaving the communities they serve, we are working to grow the clinical workforce where it is needed most and improve speech and language services for children in Colorado schools.

Submitted by: Caitlin Raaz, RiteCare Program Director, UNC, Greeley

St. Mary's Hospital RiteCare Speech and Language Program

In January 2026, we launched our Scottish Rite Grant Program **Bridging the Gap, Speech, and Language While You Are Waiting**. We invited a total of 10 families who were on our waiting list for speech and language therapy, or they had concerns about their child's speech and language development to participate in the program.

Each family received:

1. A tablet downloaded with the Tutela Toddler Language Development Program by Dr. Caitlin Raaz
2. A backpack with miscellaneous toys to encourage play interactions for language stimulation
3. A handout with brief explanations of language stimulation techniques
4. Handouts indicating age level expectations appropriate for their individual child

The families also agreed to have their child participate in a speech and language screening, before and after they viewed the video presentations.

The 10th family completed the surveys and turned in their tablet on July 15, 2026.

These are a few of the comments from the final surveys critiquing the program: *"Very happy with this program and thankful for the resources," "Great program" and "The program was very thorough and easily understandable."*

We are so grateful to have had the opportunity to offer this program to our community, and we are looking forward to sharing these parent training videos with even more families.

Thank you for your ongoing support and the opportunities to pilot innovative programs which provide educational experiences benefiting the families in our community.

**Submitted by: Amy Brophy-Neilsen, RiteCare Program Director
St. Mary's Hospital Grand Junction CO**





Treasure Chest News

Hello all! As we wrap up our school year, parents have been happy to have been served all year and are already asking to make sure that we are offering the program in the fall when they return. We have seen so much growth with the children through Treasure Chest and parents have been letting us know how much they appreciate the program

As we get our end-of-year surveys back, the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Parents are letting us know that the materials, specifically the books we have been able to supply, have been enjoyed immensely by their children. One of the parents reached out asking where we got the books, as her toddler had used one of the books so much, it needed to be replaced!



Another one of the preschool parents let us know that she feels like her child is ready for kindergarten based on how much he has improved with the Treasure Chest program.

During a visit with a staff member, a parent let them know that without Treasure Chest, she would not have been able to work on her child's language skills at home. She was unable to afford pencils, markers, and books. With the help of Scottish Rite, we provided an entire bag full of art supplies, books, and ideas and helped mom learn how to encourage her child to use them.

We are so happy with the items that we have provided with the help of the Scottish Rite foundation. Thank you so much for the continued support in the

lives of so many children in our communities we serve. We look forward to serving more children with speech delays as we continue to grow our program.

**Submitted by: Lisa Morgan, Treasure Chest Program Coordinator,
Grand Junction**



Children's Hospital Colorado Children's Outpatient Speech Pathology – Health Pavilion

Program updates from the Health Pavilion. We have one summer group running, Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) Book club with Kelly Taylor and Allie Hanson. This group is for children ages 7-9 who use AAC devices and centers around a book each week giving the kids opportunities to communicate with other kids with AAC devices.

We have one new team member who joined us in May, Mary Valucci, as our Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) therapist, but also has vast experience in AAC and Autism:

Welcome new DHH SLP at the Health Pavilion – Mary Valucci



Hi, my name is Mary Valucci I have been a Speech Language Pathologist since 2015 and have worked with the pediatric population in a wide variety of settings. I am passionate about supporting a child's journey to access and process their world to then develop their own method of communication. This led me to my ESDM Certification and specialties in Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Autism, and AAC. I am very excited to be here at Children's Hospital and to be part of such an amazing team!

Submitted by Sarah Metzler, Associate Clinical Manager, Outpatient Speech Pathology - Health Pavilion, Children's Colorado



This year, thanks to the generosity of the Scottish Rite Foundation, along with the Buell Foundation and the Edward Madigan Foundation. The Children's Speech & Reading Center was able to bring its complete early literacy program to 79 preschoolers in Fort Collins and Loveland at no cost to their families. Children took part through five partnering preschools, so that cost was never a barrier to getting an early start on reading.

The program meets children right where they are. Each fall, we screen preschoolers for the early skills that research shows predict later reading success, things like recognizing letters, hearing the individual sounds within words, and noticing rhymes. Children who could use an extra boost then join a fun, engaging series of about 20 weekly group lessons that runs from October through April.

The results this year were remarkable. Across every skill we measure, these 79 children made significant gains, with some of the biggest leaps in letter sounds and beginning-sound awareness — the building blocks of reading. By spring, 82% of the children had met or exceeded the target range in at least four skill areas, and nearly half had reached it in every single area. Most importantly, these children now head into kindergarten with a stronger foundation and a better chance to thrive. It is a joy to watch them grow, and we are deeply grateful to the Scottish Rite for making it possible.

Submitted by: Cheryl Campbell, RiteCare Program Director, CSRC, Ft. Collins/Loveland

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