Celebrating Our Past, Elevating Our Future

Scholars Unlimited

2018 Annual Report
**WE’RE CELEBRATING!**

*Think back to the summer of 1993*....

It was a pivotal year in Denver. A start-up burrito joint called Chipotle opened on Evans Avenue. Major-league baseball came to a legion of Front Range fans, who embraced the Colorado Rockies as the expansion team played its very first season – at Mile High Stadium. And sadly, the summer of 1993 is now remembered as Denver’s “Summer of Violence.”

We remember 1993 for something else. That was the year that Cyndi Kahn and Paul Hamilton, the principal at Hallett Elementary, put together a half-day summer reading program for a little girl named Chanelle and 20 other students.

They didn’t know it then, but Cyndi and Paul had planted the seeds for Summer Scholars.

Now, 25 years later, Chipotle is a “fast casual” restaurant with nearly 2,500 outlets... the Blake Street Bombers are a distant memory... and Summer Scholars is known as Scholars Unlimited.

What remains unchanged is our organization’s unwavering commitment to helping young students achieve their unlimited potential. We continue to be unlimited in our gratitude for all of the community partners and donors who help our scholars develop a love of reading – and learning. And we are unlimited in our excitement as we look forward to the next 25 years.

**WE’RE ELEVATING!**

Scholars Unlimited has a rich history of evolution and innovation, always with one key goal in mind: to consistently improve program quality and better meet the needs of children and families.

We may be a 25-year-old organization, but we continue to learn and grow. That’s why we were eager to participate in the Next Generation City Builders program. Willing to pilot a kindergarten transition program. And thrilled to be serving students at schools in Aurora and Westminster.

We invite our scholars to be life-long learners ... and we strive to do the same! We hope you’ll continue your journey with Scholars Unlimited as we strive to learn from research and evaluation, to respond to changing community needs, and to serve more children in new and innovative ways.

That journey begins now. Let’s go!
Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Twenty-five years ago, what was to become Summer Scholars started as a vision. That vision was to create a warm and nurturing environment where children could reach their full potential and unlock the power of reading. From a half-day program in one school, we have grown dramatically since 1993, and we are so grateful to be celebrating our 25th anniversary this year.

Indeed, growth has become our mantra! In 2018, we launched programs in Aurora and Westminster, in addition to growing our footprint in Denver itself. Not only are we serving more students, but we have leveraged every opportunity to offer new program components. Innovation in programming allows us to build on what we do well and respond to broader community needs:

- We piloted a K-transition program this summer, focused on rising kindergartners. The program increased the social-emotional learning of our youngest scholars, increasing their readiness for when they start school.
- Our partnership with the City of Denver allowed us to pilot STEM enrichment curriculum with the Next Generation City Builders program, which also engaged industry partners as volunteers and role models in Maker Spaces that allowed our scholars to build, create, and experiment with hands-on activities.
- Our partnership with DPS’ Summer Academy increased our geographic footprint to Southwest Denver and allowed us to strengthen our presence in the Near Northeast, Montbello, and Green Valley Ranch.

As you will see in this Annual Report, our data continues to show that our Scholars increase their reading fluency and comprehension. We are focused on expanding the ways in which we can share what we do so well even more effectively by continuing to grow our professional development training, including our principal internship program, and our support for teachers, para-professional and youth development instructors.

The heart of Scholars Unlimited is a combination of “why not?” - from Cyndi Kahn - and a data-driven “how can you not?” - from Jessica Pearson. Those visionary leaders built a foundation -- and a community that has sustained us over the last 25 years. On that foundation and with your partnership, we continue forward with a “we can!” attitude and a goal to bring our strong comprehensive, literacy-based after-school and summer programs to every child who needs support. We are so excited to see what the next 25 years might bring, and look forward to standing shoulder-to-shoulder with you to bring that vision to life.

Warm regards,

Diana Romero Campbell
President

Erica Salmon Byrne
Chair of the Board
Maddy Continues to Rise as a Mile High Scholar

If you attended the 2017 Breakfast of Scholars, you probably remember meeting Madelynn, the little girl featured in our video presentation with her “mom” Marie (her biological grandmother). Marie has loved Maddy from Day One, and has provided a safe, secure and loving home since Maddy was three-and-a-half.

As Marie explained, “Maddy’s parents both suffered from the disease of addiction.” The disease’s effects on their child were profound.

“When Madelynn came to me, she was deemed by doctors as ‘failure to thrive.’” Marie recalls. “She weighed 24 pounds. She had never been to preschool. And she had no social skills at all.”

Eventually, when it was time for Maddy to begin school, Marie enrolled her at Ashley Elementary. “I was so thrilled when I found out about the Scholars Unlimited program at her school. It was just a great fit for Madelynn because she needed every opportunity to practice social skills and learn what it means to be a member of a group.”

Maddy blossomed in the Summer Scholars program and Scholars After School. The extra literacy intervention was critical: When she moved to Marie’s home, she had significant oral language deficits, and she qualified for special education services in preschool, then at Ashley.

Today, Maddy is thriving. She is an avid reader and is reading at grade-level. She has emerged as a real advocate for reading, and is a leader among her peers.

So when Denver Public Schools was seeking nominations for 2018’s Mile High Scholars, it was no surprise that Ashley’s principal selected Maddy.

“The principal, Mr. Rahn, called me. I was initially shocked that Maddy was nominated for her class, and then chosen to represent Ashley,” Marie recalled. “I mean, it was like winning the lottery. And who expects to win the lottery? It’s remarkable when you think about from whence she came to where she’s at. Remarkable.”

And she credits Scholars Unlimited with helping Maddy achieve her remarkable success. “The program is unbelievable. It has helped her so much in her growth. Not just the academic things, but also the arts and enrichment, and her self-confidence. It is phenomenal.”

Phenomenal. Just like Maddy and Marie.

Third-grade reading proficiency is a predictor of long-term success: Children who have experienced poverty and who cannot read proficiently by the end of third grade are six times more likely to drop out and never earn a high school diploma.

Annie E. Casey Foundation
Scholars Unlimited uses DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), a brief assessment that measures student ability within the five domains of literacy: alphabetic principle, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, word accuracy, and fluency, and comprehension. If students can master these skills, they unlock the code of reading.

Scholars Unlimited administers the DIBELS to every student. The first assessment identifies each child’s individual learning needs, enabling us to tailor instruction. At the end of our programs, DIBELS results measure each child’s progress. Aggregate data enables us to evaluate overall effectiveness.

The DIBELS consists of several brief sub-tests. Based on grade level and scores, students are ranked in one of three categories for each test: well below benchmark, below benchmark, and at or above benchmark. Results of DIBELS sub-tests demonstrate student growth:

### Our Results: The DIBELS PSF Test

The Phoneme Segmentation Fluency test measures a student’s ability to segment three- and four-phoneme words into individual phonemes, or sounds—a skill that is essential to learning to read. Therefore, the PSF test is a reliable predictor of later reading achievement.

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<th>After-School Program 2016-17</th>
<th>Summer Program 2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>Post-Test</td>
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<tr>
<td>At Risk</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Risk</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>At or Above Benchmark</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>75.1%</td>
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### Our Results: The DIBELS ORF Test

The DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency test gauges the automaticity of reading, or the ability to effortlessly translate letters into sounds into words. Fluent reading is crucial for reading comprehension: When students aren’t struggling to read words, their minds are free to understand the meanings of those words.

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<th>Summer Program 2017</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>Post-Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Risk</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Risk</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At or Above Benchmark</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
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### Our Results: The DIBELS ORF Retell Test

The DIBELS ORF-Retell test measures reading comprehension, which is considered the very essence of reading. After all, we don’t just read to read—we read for meaning and understanding.

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<th>Summer Program 2017</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>Post-Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Risk</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Risk</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At or Above Benchmark</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
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Last year, an outside evaluator, REC, conducted a rigorous analysis of our DIBELS data. Their key findings included:

- Among Scholars After School participants, students who began in the Well Below Benchmark category experienced statistically significant growth in their average DIBELS scores between pre- and post-test.
- Participants in all grade levels increased in their average DIBELS composite score, ranging from 28.0 percent increases for fifth-graders to 207.8 percent for kindergarten students. Third-grade students’ scores increased 56.6 percent.
- Likewise, for students in the summer program, participants in all grade levels increased in their average DIBELS composite scores. Third-grade students experienced the largest average percent change at 24.6 percent.
- Students who participated in both programs experienced the most significant growth. Kindergarten students experienced the largest average percent increase at 162.2 percent, followed by 104.0 percent for second-graders and 68.7 percent for third-graders.
Enrichment Activity Helps 8-Year-Old Face His Fears

Conrad has wonderful memories of his participation in Scholar’s Unlimited’s 2018 summer program: Field trips to Jumpstreet and Roller City. Reading the book *Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus* (which he called “the most interesting thing I read in my life, because the characters are unique and different in their own way.”) And swim lessons.

Conrad is enthusiastic about swimming now – but it certainly didn’t start out that way.

Conrad’s dad had provided some swim instruction previously. But Conrad’s mom, Robbin, said it was “like starting over completely” when Conrad, his twin sister, and all the summer scholars at John Amesse started swim lessons.

Robbin was a Youth Development Instructor in Denver Parks and Rec’s Community Recreation team at John Amesse, so was on site with her kids every day. Her role as a mom took precedence one day. “They came and got me and pulled me from my group because Conrad was crying. He was really, really nervous being in the pool.”

Conrad said he was more than nervous. “I’ve always been afraid of going underwater because I’ve always been afraid of drowning. I was afraid to get my eyes wet. I was afraid to get my nose in water ‘cause then I wouldn’t be able to breathe. It was scary!”

But eventually, thanks to the support of the adult staff, Conrad said he wanted to try again. “They helped me by encouraging me. And because I trusted them, I went back in the water.”

That trust helped Conrad overcome his fears – and once he felt comfortable putting his head in the water, he even wanted to practice at home. Robbin remembers, “One evening, he wanted me to get him a bucket of water so he could practice dipping his head in the water. And I’m thinking, ‘This is crazy!’ But it was also amazing. He really did overcome his fears, and now he’s actually excited about being in the water.”

Robbin is proud of her son, and grateful for the opportunity for her twins to participate in a comprehensive summer program. “In the summer, kids aren’t doing much reading. But this program is actively focused on literacy. They also did science projects, lots of different activities, field trips, and the recreational stuff. They met new children and made friends. They got the full package this summer!”

And Conrad’s sister had one thing to add: “I’m proud of him for facing his fears.”

“An exclusive focus on academics within after-school programs is much less effective than offering a broad variety of academic and enrichment activities. Students who participate in multi-faceted programs are likely to reap the biggest academic gains.”

Harvard Family Research Project

Since 1994, Scholars Unlimited has provided comprehensive programs that include literacy tutoring, hands-on activities ranging from the arts to STEM, and a variety of recreation. Enrichment programming promotes **hands-on learning**, which gives students **broader knowledge** across multiple content areas and enables them to practically **apply classroom skills** to real-life situations. Both enrichment and recreation activities can help kids **discover** new interests and even ignite new passions. And sometimes, recreation can help kids overcome their fears and take their confidence to new heights.
Join Cyndi Kahn and Others as a Catalyst in the Legacy Society

In 2014, when Summer Scholars was conducting research that eventually led to our new name, we asked “What is the first thing you think of when you hear ‘Summer Scholars’?”

One of the more frequent answers was “Cyndi Kahn.”

So many friends and supporters of this organization know that Cyndi was a catalyst. She drove the development and delivery of our first half-day literacy program 25 years ago. She rallied neighbors and other community activists – and together, they enlisted dozens of early partners, supporters and advocates for the fledgling organization.

And now, Cyndi is a catalyst for the sustainability of Scholars Unlimited. Because she has included a bequest in her will to the organization she helped create.

We know Cyndi as a caring and generous individual. Making a will is a practical way for Cyndi to extend her care and generosity to family and friends – and the causes she cares about most.

We hope you will join Cyndi, Linda Brown, and others as members of the Legacy Society – friends of Scholars Unlimited who have included the organization in their wills or estate plans. You’ll be leaving a legacy of compassion and care for the students we serve.

To learn more, please visit our ScholarsUnlimited.org, or call Coleen Truax at 303-381-3746.

Legal Name: Summer Scholars (dba Scholars Unlimited)
Address: 3401 Quebec St., #5010 • Denver, CO 80207-2327
Federal Tax ID Number: 84-1314292

CodeSpire Provides STEM Education Across Communities

In the fall of 2014, Summer Scholars received exciting news: We were invited to participate in the Colorado Nonprofit Social Enterprise Exchange, an intensive 10-month program that provides training, tools, and peer-to-peer support in order to help non-profit participants develop a social enterprise from the ground up.

The process began in 2015, led by Board members Travis Luther and Spencer Reedy. After conducting a market analysis and feasibility study, we set out to create CodeSpire – a business that offers after-school and summer camps to help kids become literate in computer languages.

CodeSpire’s first courses were offered in the summer of 2016, and the number of student participants has grown rapidly since then, thanks to CodeSpire’s exciting offerings: Participants build circuits, program drones and robots, make Minecraft modifications, and create games and apps.

Even more exciting: Our little start-up business has started to generate profits, which are directed to supporting the core programs of Scholars Unlimited.

www.codespire.com
THANK YOU!

These two small words cannot capture the depth of our gratitude to the many foundations, businesses, and caring individuals who bring our mission to life.

We thank the following for your gifts occurring during our 2017 fiscal year (November 1, 2016 thru October 31, 2017). We are tremendously grateful for your support – and so are our scholars.

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($100,000 or more)

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At the 2016 Breakfast of Scholars, Board member Malissa Williams introduced the Brighter Futures Circle – an exciting new giving opportunity for our most committed donors to make a five-year pledge to create brighter futures for the students we serve.

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In addition, many other individuals have made multiple-year pledges or have chosen to become sustaining donors by making monthly gifts via ColoradoGives.org. Our warmest thanks to:
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Cheryl Stafford and Lee Groom
Gayle Wilhelm
David Wilkins

If you’d like to join the Brighter Futures Circle or learn more about being a sustaining donor visit our website ScholarsUnlimited.org or call Coleen Truax at 303-381-3746.
Summer Scholars helped Saijeed develop an unlimited belief in himself. Now he’s working to share those life lessons with the next generation of scholars.

Saijeed grew up in a home where life was often chaotic and caring adults weren’t always present. “I grew up at the end of the crack era,” he recalls. “There was drug use in my home and in my neighborhood. I experienced physical abuse and emotional abuse. So I was one of those troublesome kids at school. I really didn’t have a good home life, and it affected my school life as well.”

Fortunately, when he was in first grade, Saijeed’s mom enrolled him in Scholars After School at Columbine Elementary. “My mother mostly saw the Scholars program as an after-school day care. What she didn’t realize was that I was actually learning while I was there.”

Saijeed was enrolled in our after-school and summer programs during all of his elementary years. And while he credits the programs with helping improve his reading scores, he’s even more grateful that his participation instilled a love for education, and helped him learn life skills that have empowered him to succeed beyond the expectations of many.

“Scholars gave me a network of people, teachers and students alike. Many students were in similar home situations. So I could really connect.” Being in Scholars taught me how to have friends and how to be kind to others. It helped me open up more, and learn to adapt to different things and different kinds of people. Those are things that you carry for the rest of your life.”

By the time he started seventh grade, Saijeed had made up his mind to pursue a career in education. “I’m working to become a teacher because I know that there are a lot of kids who struggle – and I know I can make life better for kids who are like me when I was their age.”

To gain experience, Saijeed spent his summer working as a Youth Development Instructor in our summer program at McGlone Academy of the Montbello Children’s Network. And he used the lessons instilled in him years ago. “I tried to encourage the students to really talk about themselves. I tried to create a place that is a safe haven where kids can really express themselves. Because I want them to win the game of life.”

Positive Youth Development: A strategy to promote social-emotional learning

Scholars Unlimited uses positive youth development principles and practices to help students build skills within the five domains of emotional intelligence:

- **Self-awareness** (the ability to recognize one’s own emotions)
- **Self-management** (the ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts and behaviors)
- **Social awareness** (the ability to recognize emotions in others)
- **Relationship skills** (communication, active listening, conflict negotiation)
- **Responsible decision-making**

“Student success comes when cognitive skills work in tandem with so-called soft skills like self-control, persistence, social awareness, relationship development, and self-awareness.”

Stanford Social Innovation Review
City of Denver and Scholars Unlimited Team Up to Spark Learning

The Next Generation City Builders program, a robust public-private partnership, provided hands-on STEM enrichment to hundreds of summer scholars.

When Denver voters approved a $937 million bond package last year, they said “yes” to hundreds of construction projects that will take place over two decades. Outdated buildings will be replaced. Bridges and infrastructure will be upgraded. And miles of roads, bike lanes and sidewalks will be added to the city.

But there will be challenges, too. Including: How can the City ensure it is filling the pipeline to meet its high demand for engineers, project managers, skilled laborers and more?

That’s where our new enrichment program, Next Generation City Builders, comes in. A public-private partnership, Next Generation City Builders is designed to help young children develop creative-thinking and problem-solving skills through STEM curriculum. And it will likely contribute to workforce development.

“When we thought about a community-based organization that had the capability and infrastructure to roll out this program for the first time, Scholars Unlimited was our first choice,” said Erin Brown, Executive Director of the Office of Children’s Affairs. “Denver is committed to engaging youth in STEM-related activities at an early age to expand opportunities for economic growth for all young people across the city.”

The City enlisted Jacobs – a global provider of engineering, architecture, and construction services – as the lead program sponsor. Jacobs invested generously to develop the City’s future builders and innovators. Numerous other construction and engineering firms also contributed; see our website for a complete list.

Scholars Unlimited was equally excited. “The Next Generation City Builders program is educational and engaging,” said Diana Romero Campbell, president of our organization. “This program enables our scholars to learn about ‘real-life’ applications of science, technology, engineering and math while they participate in hands-on/minds-on activities that are really fun. We’re grateful to the City for this opportunity, and to the many companies who made the program possible.”
Kindergarten Readiness CAN Be Taught

Kindergarten readiness is a precursor to success in the earliest year of school – and success in kindergarten paves the way for ongoing academic achievement.

To help more young learners be prepared for kindergarten success, Scholars Unlimited tested a K-transition program for 22 students at three schools as part of our 2018 summer program. Students participated in a half-day program focused on helping them develop social-emotional, literacy, and math skills that are crucial for success in kindergarten.

Curriculum for the program was developed by Dorothy Shapland, Ed.D., in collaboration with Linda Abeyta, our director of instruction. Dorothy is an assistant professor in the Department of Special Education, Early Childhood and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education at Metropolitan State University of Denver.

Dorothy and Linda focused on helping our youngest program participants develop specific skills within three focus areas:

- **Social-Emotional Development:** Managing feelings, interacting with peers, making friends, and following expectations.
- **Math:** Counting, quantifying, and patterning.
- **Literacy:** Oral language, using books, using print concepts, interacting during reading, retelling stories and sharing information; and being able to write own name.

“As a former kindergarten teacher, I can tell you that a child who can write his or her own name at the start of kindergarten has such a leg up over a student who can’t,” said Dr. Shapland. “These readiness skills are key for making advances in kindergarten.”

She noted that even students who attended pre-school need a transition program. “Summer slide occurs in little ones, too. So for some kids, there is a need to shore up what they got in pre-K.” Of course, not all participants had attended a pre-K program, so the program introduced them to the routines and rituals of a learning environment.

To measure the program’s impact, teachers used the TS Gold® evaluation. Based on TS Gold results, Dorothy said the program was very effective. “On the whole, these students went from being barely at skill level at the beginning of the program to being well within the range of readiness just six weeks later.”

With the success of this pilot, Scholars Unlimited hopes to offer a more robust program next year. Dorothy is already planning ahead: “I hope we can hire students of education to work in the classrooms to improve program quality, and create a more literature-rich curriculum.”

### Four Key Measures of Kindergarten Readiness

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Pre-Test Score</th>
<th>Post-Test Score</th>
<th>Readiness Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Follows directions and expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retells stories and recounts information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writes name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connects quantity with numeral</td>
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2017 Financial Information
For the Fiscal Year Nov. 1, 2016 thru Oct. 30, 2017

21st Century Community Learning Center grants 648,839
Tony Grampsas Youth Services 86,955
Denver Parks and Recreation 125,500
City/County of Denver 50,000
Private Foundation grants 267,822
Mile High United Way 50,000
Fees for Service 55,341
Gifts from Individuals 255,230
Breakfast of Scholars 151,696
Endowment Proceeds 93,137
Other/Miscellaneous 617
Total Revenues 1,785,137
In Kind Support 654,152
Total Support and Revenues 2,439,289

Expenses
Program Services 2,093,521
Program Support: administration 324,105
Program Support: Fundraising 216,826
2,634,452

Net Loss (195,163)

Net Assets, Beginning of Year 1,248,475
Net Assets, End of Year 1,053,312

Income

Expenses
Not all superheroes wear capes.

You have the power. The power to be a superhero.

All it takes is a big heart. A desire to help kids learn and grow. A passion for helping students become proficient readers. Or a commitment to creating a more equitable landscape in our little corner of the world.

Whatever your “why,” combine it with your financial support to Scholars Unlimited and you can help a resilient girl like Maddy become a Mile High Scholar. Or enable a brave little boy like Conrad to become fearless in the water. You can help a young person like Saijeed meet compassionate, caring adults who’ll inspire him to become a leader in adulthood.

There are so many ways to support Scholars Unlimited:
• Join the Brighter Futures Circle by making a pledge to give $1,000 or more per year for five years.
• Make a monthly gift via Coloradogives.org (Like our Board member Ali Mickelson).
• Leverage your employer’s matching gifts program to increase the value of your contribution.
• Include Scholars Unlimited in your giving on Colorado Gives Day, December 4th.
• Donate appreciated stock or securities (and reap the associated tax benefits, too).
• Honor someone special by making a tribute or memorial gift.
• Join the Legacy Society by including Scholars Unlimited in your will or estate plans.

Make a gift of any size, at any time, and you’ll be helping kids reach their unlimited potentials.

That really is a super power. And there’s no cape required.

To all of our donors, partners and friends – THANK YOU for making success stories possible!

All financial contributions to Scholars Unlimited qualify for the Colorado Child Care Contribution Credit, a 50% tax credit available to individuals and businesses that file Colorado state tax returns.