

CIRCLES SALT LAKE 2019

IMPACT REPORT





A LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BENJAMIN SESSIONS

02

What the Circles Model has taught me.

As humans, I believe we have a deep desire to contribute, support, and improve our communities. We see our friends, neighbors, and loved ones experience hardships including illness, trauma, financial devastation, and poverty. When we see the distress these events cause: the pain, the suffering, the frustration to overcome, we want to support and lend a hand. However, we can become desensitized to this pain because we see it so often and because the metaphorical mountain seems too great to climb.

Poverty is one of these mountains. Before my engagement with Circles Salt Lake, I too wondered if the mountain called poverty could be climbed. I wondered, what tools would I need to climb this mountain, what knowledge should I obtain before the climb, how do I lend a hand to those who are climbing it without getting in their way? What do the people look like who climb this mountain? Who are the people that climb this mountain? Being involved with Circles has answered many of these questions and below I want to share with you some of my experiences:

Children are the ones that suffer most. There have been times when I get home at night to tuck my two young boys into bed after they just finished a healthy dinner and spent the day playing in a safe, clean neighborhood. In contrast, there have been times when I have dropped off food at one of our participant's homes and learned that some of the children that we work with had missed several meals and the food they are able to eat is often lacking basic nutrition. In other cases, there is a lack of green space where the children can play or the living conditions are unsafe and make it challenging to spend time outdoors. These moments offer clarity that the mountain may be tall, but I cannot stop climbing until all children can be tucked into bed feeling safe with bellies full of healthy nutritious food, exhausted from playing with their friends in safe clean spaces.

The Circles Model works. Circles pairs families in poverty with volunteers from middle and upper income socioeconomic backgrounds. We meet weekly to focus on goal setting and socializing. The objective of Circles is to collectively support families in poverty as they work toward achieving middle class incomes as defined by 200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines (\$52,000 for a family of 4). The Circles Model works in most cases because someone further up the economic ladder reaches down to help lift someone up. Our participants feel valued and recognize that someone is there to help them break through barriers that they might not break through alone. With love and support, families in poverty are making their way to financial independence, which directly improves the lives of children in our community. One of Circles Salt Lake's greatest moments of 2019 was when a mother of 7 and a refugee from Myanmar, bought her first home. Her Ally, the name we give our Circles volunteers who support a family in poverty, helped this mother achieve this goal by being a friend, educating her about saving and investing, and preparing her for homeownership. These two women climbed this metaphorical mountain together. She now has a safe permanent home for her children to thrive. Circles Salt Lake is collectively improving the lives of adults experiencing poverty through education, employment, and social capital. These improvements are directly affecting families' lives positively.

It is possible to make a positive change. The Circles model is a great place to volunteer because families support families. The mountain may seem large, but we will reach the top. We invite you to join us as we climb the mountain together.

Benjamin J. Sessions

CIRCLES Salt Lake County

Executive Director



A LETTER FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR ERIN HOGLTAYLOR

In 2017, my amazing friend Ashley Hoopes, Founder of Circles Salt Lake, asked me to become a volunteer with a new organization she was bringing to Salt Lake City. I was excited to be part of an organization that was instrumental in making real change for families living in poverty. Her enthusiasm was infectious and she was able to bring many wonderful people together to work at solving systemic problems among low income and homeless populations in our city. The last three years has been filled with many ups and downs, but one thing that has remained constant is Circles Salt Lake's passion to help the underserved in our community. In January of 2019 I was humbled when asked to serve as the Board Chair of this incredible organization. When accepting this position, I knew there would be a steep learning curve and that our current board would face many challenges in our first year. I have been honored to serve among some of the finest citizens of our beautiful city who share the common goal of bringing communities together to solve difficult problems. I am grateful for their wise counsel. To our dedicated employees and Executive Director, Benjamin Sessions, I would also like to express my gratitude for their hard work and dedication to the cause. Finally, I say with a humbled heart a huge thank you to our volunteers, community partners, Circle leaders, donors and amazing Allies. For your time, resources, kindness and dedication to making Salt Lake a safer and more equitable place to live, you are all my heroes.

Erin Hogle Taylor

A CLOSER LOOK AT OUR CHAPTER

Circles Salt Lake serves low-income families by building bridges of friendship and community that support them on their journey from surviving to thriving. Here are some of the outcomes this year:

01

1 New American Circle Leader obtained her Citizenship status

02

2 New American Circle Leaders got their driver's licenses, bought vehicles, and licensed and insured said vehicles

03

3 Circle Leaders reached the goal of earning at least 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines

04

4 Circle Leaders who were unemployed are now employed

05

5 Circle Leaders enrolled in Higher Education (College)

10

10 Circle Leaders who had been chronically homeless found/maintained housing

OUR COMMUNITY



A participant in the Circles program is called a Circle Leader. They are empowered to take the lead, and the Circles Initiative assists them in leading their personal journey out of poverty by wrapping a circle of support around them. They need connections to resources, employment, and a supportive network of friends. This is what the Circles Initiative provides to Circle Leaders.

The volunteers that become “intentional friends” to the Circle Leaders are called Allies. Allies are volunteers from middle and upper-income households who encourage, support, guide, and advocate for Circle Leaders. Allies expand the social capital of Circle Leaders by giving them access to their own social networks, which are often wider, stronger and more diverse. The long-term support provided by Circles is a necessary component to other short-term support and training programs.

VOLUNTEER AT CIRCLES

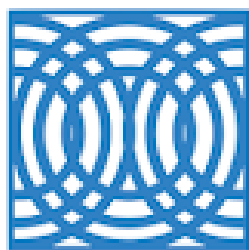
You can help reduce poverty throughout Salt Lake by serving on a Resource Team.

Help create a warm and welcoming environment with the Community Team; support by donating a meal or caring for children at the weekly meeting.

Bring in volunteers and potential Circle Leaders with Recruitment Team. Connect Circle Leaders to various services they need with the Services Team. Change systemic barriers that will help thousands of people out of poverty with the Big View Team. And help the Circle Leaders create a resume they can be proud of with the Jobs and Education Team.

Resource Teams

- Community Team
- Recruitment Team
- Services Team
- Big View Team
- Jobs and Education Team



CIRCLES SALT LAKE
Building Community to End Poverty

CIRCLE LEADER WIN



This is Jess. She was working 3 jobs trying to make ends meet when she started at Circles Salt Lake. One night as she was discussing goals with her Allies, Cristina and Mark, and they asked her “What is one more thing you can do to improve? Why not finish your Associates Degree?” Jess decided to set that as her goal. Before the next meeting she had filled out the FAFSA and only needed to pay \$300 for tuition and books. She attended classes online and in two semesters she completed the 16 credits she needed. Congratulations Jess!

Mark then challenged Jess to ask for a raise before Thanksgiving. Jess talked with Janelle, an Ally who chairs our Jobs and Education team to figure out how much she needed to make so that she could make ends meet on only one full-time job. Janelle and Mark also gave her some tips on how to ask for a raise. Mark even role played as her boss and Jess practiced how she would ask for a raise several times. She was still nervous about it, but with the tips, skills and practice she felt more confident. She was given a \$2 an hour raise and was able to quit her other two part-time jobs!

CIRCLE LEADER WIN

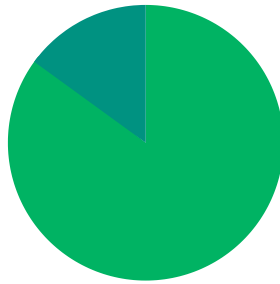


Say Pan set a goal during Circle Leader Training to buy a house and learned about setting aside savings first and she now has saved \$1300. Say Pan immigrated to the US as a Refugee from Burma on December 4, 2014. She had a dream of becoming a homeowner. She has worked really hard as a housekeeper at a large hotel in downtown Salt Lake City. She often takes extra shifts and works overtime. In February of 2019 she began attending Circle Leader Training and learned about budgeting and saving. James from Zions Bank shared information about “paying yourself first” by depositing 10% into your savings account. Say Pan was really excited about this idea and began “paying herself” every paycheck. In October and November Say Pan and her Ally Kathy had many meetings with lenders, realtors, and down payment assistance programs. On December 5, 2019, just five years after arriving in this country Say Pan closed on her very own house and began moving in.

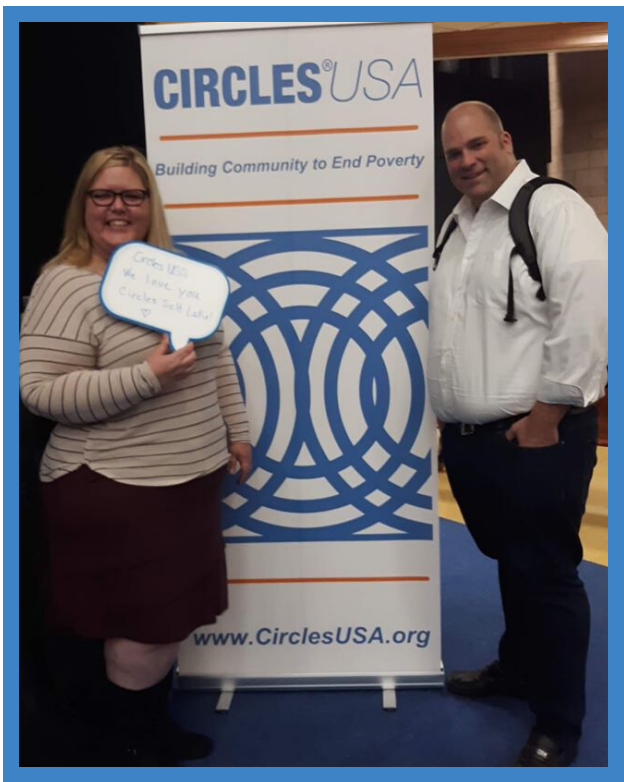
CIRCLES SALT LAKE 2019 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

In 2019 Circles Salt Lake received \$100,600 in Donations and Grants. Link to Circles Salt Lake IRS Determination letter and 2019 990 filing <https://circlessaltlake.org/irs-reports/>

Administrative Expenses
15%



Program Expenses
85%



MAJOR DONORS

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Heather, Gaius,
and Roman
Sessions Family

Erin Page
Family

Hydrant ID /
Erin & Rocky
Tayler Family

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CAPITAL
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National Charity League, Inc.
SALT LAKE CITY

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