

CEO of Boulder Valley nonprofit Impact on Education to retire

Francie Anhut's successor plans to focus on advocacy, partnerships

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Impact on Education leader Francie Anhut is retiring, passing the fundraising torch to longtime Boulder Valley School District volunteer Fran Ryan.

The nonprofit raises money for Boulder Valley schools, honors local teachers with annual awards and coordinates a school-supply drive for Boulder Valley and St. Vrain Valley students. As its new chief executive officer, Ryan said her plans include more advocacy around education funding issues, seeking out more partnerships with other nonprofits, and searching out people who are passionate about education topics.

"Folks give money around their passions," she said.

Ryan, who previously served as chairwoman of Boulder Valley's District Accountability Committee and helped start the district's Parent Engagement Network, said she plans to spend July "visiting and listening" before the Impact office reopens in August after its summer break.

"It's a privilege for me to be able to raise money and give it away to support education," she said.

She said she wants to keep the organization's focus on supporting teachers and will reinstate the mini-grant program after it went on hiatus last school year. The program provides small grants to teachers for classroom projects.

Campaigning for a Boulder Valley property tax increase -- a ballot measure that still needs final approval from the school board -- also is on her agenda. So is broadening the organization's support for families struggling to afford hefty fees for classes and extracurricular activities.

Anhut, who's helping with Ryan's transition, said her successor is well suited for the job.

"I couldn't feel happier leaving my baby in her hands," she said.

Anhut started at Impact in 2003, when it was called the Foundation for Boulder Valley Schools. She used focus groups and surveys to query the community on education needs, then created a strategic plan that added technology and at-risk students to the existing focus on helping teachers.

She said she's most proud of the Crayons to Calculators school supply drive, which brought together nonprofits throughout Boulder County for a collaborative drive. But her favorite projects have been ones that introduced new technologies into schools.

"We can meet kids where they are and engage them in the ways they like to learn," she said.

Anhut recently was honored by the Boulder Valley school board for her service.

Board President Ken Roberge praised her for reinventing and improving the organization and serving as "a great ambassador for the school district."

"She's done a very good job of focusing on important areas and making significant changes in those areas of focus," he said. "You have to recognize her hard work and her energy."

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