How Far We’ve Come
Over 15 Years of Giving a Lift to Women in Need

In 1994 an assembly of friends who belonged to an informal bicycle group banded together to support one of its members during her battle with lung cancer. After her passing this group of friends realized there must be many other women within the lesbian community that were in need of financial support during their time of need. When an illness strikes it can deplete ones financial resources at a rapid pace leaving that individual not only fighting for her health but fighting to pay the bills. And thus the ATL Foundation was established as a 501 (C)3 nonprofit corporation for the benefit of the lesbian community.

Throughout the past 15 years the ATL Foundation has been continually fundraising to provide grants to women who are suffering from a variety of illnesses and health related life events. The short-term financial support ATL offers allows these women a little monetary relief so they may focus on what is truly important, their recovery. As independent self-sustaining women asking for help can be a challenge. On many occasions grant requests have been received by worried friends and family.

Over the years fundraising efforts have included casino nights, golf tournaments, bowling events, brunches, luaus and many other fun events. We are grateful to all the people who have joined us and supported a much needed cause. As lesbians public resources for our hour of need can be limited. ATL has tried to fill in some of the gaps left by the system.

Fundraising is a crucial part of any nonprofit however, raising awareness and reaching the people within the community is the ultimate goal. Throughout the past 15 years ATL has substantially increased our presence in the lesbian community through events, strategic partnerships and word of mouth. In 2007 ATL was happy to provide 60 grants and almost $50,000 in funds. Over the next 15 years we will continue to enhance our visibility and provide assistance to as many lesbians in Colorado as possible.

The continued growth of the ATL Foundation and outreach to the women in our community is our main goal! We look forward to your continued support in years to come. Remember, your unwavering support is priceless and can help women get through an unbearable situation.

“Giving a Lift to Women in Need.”

Be sure to visit us at www.ATLFoundation.org for information on upcoming events.
Cindy and Gloria’s Story

In early 2007, Cindy and I were living comfortably. We were both employed and had purchased a condo together in downtown Denver. We had the basic luxuries of life (food, transportation, cable TV, nice furniture) and enjoyed nature and the great outdoors. Camping, cooking outdoors and being near mountain streams were our favorite. However, everything changed when we had a major health crisis in our family.

Cindy was diagnosed with diabetes in her mid twenties. Still, she was able to maintain a fairly active life style. She began to have complications with her feet and legs in her late 40’s. It was becoming increasingly more and more difficult for Cindy to walk, work and participate in activities. In July 2007 Cindy suffered her first stroke. She was hospitalized for a week, then sent to rehab for an additional two weeks. When she returned from rehab she suffered another major stroke and was again hospitalized. She was only 50 years old, but it was clear she could not return to work. She could not speak, walk, or feed herself. She needed 24 hour assistance, and there was no one but me to take care of her. I had to quit my job.

When a person suddenly loses all control of her life, she can feel very vulnerable and fearful. Helping her to feel secure was important and difficult. Although I have training in the Human Services field, I have never been a caretaker for anyone. That was a very demanding position to be in. The entire process was a huge adjustment for both of us. Cindy was dealing with her loss of independence and me trying to make it all work for her. I had to learn to do everything that involves caring for an incontinent adult, including organizing and constantly adjusting her medications, setting up her medical devices, and giving her insulin shots. It was now also my sole responsibility to maintain all the home responsibilities. I also had to take on the social worker aspects that included making all her appointments (there were many medical and social service appointments), taking her to all her appointments, making sure that all her medical and physical needs were met. I never envisioned myself doing all that.

Our lives continued to turn upside down and sideways. When Cindy had her stroke, she lost her job. Fortunately, she got short term disability benefits from her employment with the State of Colorado; however, it was not enough to pay the mortgage or bills. Furthermore, she was now responsible for paying her own medical premiums with Kaiser.

We were struggling and barely had enough money to pay doctor co-pays, buy food and put gas in the car to go to numerous doctor and human services and social security appointments. We knew that we were in deep water as the short term disability dollars would soon run out and Human Services was not responding to our pleas for help for several months.

Eventually we had to short sell our home. We found ourselves homeless. We had to separate, Cindy moving in with her mother and me going to my mother. All along we were still trying to get help where we could. While we were trying to find a way for me to get paid for caring for Cindy, we went to Atlantis, an organization that serves individuals who have disabilities. Unfortunately, we couldn’t get money for me to be her care giver; however, after sharing our story about losing our condo, we got hooked up with someone from Section 8. With God’s help we were given a section 8 voucher three months later. Now we had to find a place to live. The places we looked at were in poor, unsafe, run down neighborhoods. Besides that, while we had a voucher for a place, we had no money for a deposit or moving expenses. Eventually, we found a place where the landlords were willing to work with us.

It was at about this time we became acquainted with ATL, the best and most wonderful organization. A physical therapist through the visiting nurses association told us about the ATL Foundation and
helped us get an application. That was the beginning of a life saver for us. ATL has been our guardian angel ever since. Once we had a place to live, we needed a wheelchair and ramp access to our new home. ATL provided both.

Cindy and I were both always very independent people. We always worked and never relied on anyone for financial or other help. But everything changed. We had to apply for food stamps, Medicaid, and any service that could assist us. We began going to food banks and various churches to ask for financial help. Of course, we had never done any of this before. Fortunately, following several months we did get food stamps, but only for a short time. However, what we had to go through to get them is a whole story in itself. I’ll spare most of the details but will mention the humiliation we experienced. After having to wait for a very long time (months) to be approved, the tech called and questioned us as if we were trying to manipulate the system for their generous gift of $40.00. At one point the tech had me in tears. I was angry and humiliated because I had paid taxes all my life, now when I needed help I was being questioned as if I were trying to rip them off for $40.00.

Cindy no longer had medical insurance; she needed meds and constant medical attention. She had also been hospitalized a couple of times since her strokes. We were referred to the Family Medicine Center North by St. Anthony’s Hospital; however, they were charging her a fifty dollar co-pay and it was a long trip to and from the clinic and some of the medications that Cindy needed were very expensive. We borrowed money for gas and asked ATL to help us out. They came to our rescue again.

Having Human Services work experience, I had helped guide numerous individuals to take the steps needed to apply and receive assistance. However, I was totally unprepared for all the obstacles we had in accessing help. The hospital lost Cindy’s records and denied ever having been asked to transfer them to the appropriate government agencies that could help us. We sat in a welfare office for many hours waiting to be called upon, then waited again for weeks and months to be processed, then were told that Cindy was denied and that we would have to start over from square one to re-apply. Many attempted to console us by telling us that almost everyone is denied the first time around. Cindy was totally incapacitated according to the doctors’ reports and yet social security administrators wouldn’t consider her disabled! We were devastated. No money was coming in anymore and the few dollars we were getting from food stamps was not enough. We had a place to live but were struggling to pay the rent and bills. Cindy and I never thought we would have to ask (beg) for help like we did. ATL was truly a God send for us at that time. They helped us when we were in our deepest hole ever.

Following a year and a half and many struggles along the way, Cindy finally got approved for Social Security Disability Benefits. A couple of months later she received Medicaid. That was a long two years of uncertainty. Things started looking up (so to speak). I attempted to return to work and worked part time overnights; however, Cindy was very uncomfortable with that schedule. She was afraid to be by herself at nights. I was trying to figure out a way to make money and still be available to take her to her appointments during the day. I was totally worn out by the hours, the demands, and the stress of it all.

Then one of our cars died and the other broke down. I had to put water in the radiator to drive even five miles to my night job, and winter was coming. Once again, ATL came to our aid by helping us buy a nice used car that we could get Cindy’s wheelchair in and out of easily, and helped us save many hours and money that Access-a-Ride required.

Things have improved for us more recently. I applied for and got a full time job with a much better schedule. Cindy started attending Adult Care which she enjoys. Medicaid is still in place, she has good doctors, her sight has improved slightly and she just got her life time fishing license! Life is not the same, but we are comfortable and very thankful for what we have. We still visit food banks on occasion, but don’t have to rely on them like we use to. We deal with stress the best we can. And we count our blessings every day.

Margaret Burd and Becky Brinkman (two of our founding board members) with their Easter bonnets/hats.
KSL Memorial Motorcycle Run
By Mary Fischer

As I sit down to start this newsletter story, I can’t help but think of all the changes last year. Change seems to be the only constant this year. I like to look back to appreciate where we have come from.

I was recently reminded that we all have a story. My story started on a Saturday morning Sept 20. The phone rang to inform us that three friends were killed in an automobile accident. As the personal representative on two estates, the next several months were very much a learning experience. That started a journey to what is now the KSL memorial motorcycle Run to Pine. Come join the festivities, live music and lots of food.

It was Nov. 18 2007, when Susan P’s partner Tracy died. The grant from ATL gave her rent and their daughter Savannah had a Christmas. Susan has now finished her training as an ophthalmology tech. She believes she never would have finished had she not gotten the funds from the ATL Foundation.

So, what else is special for 2010? There will be more people needing our help. Since all lesbians are good with their mouths, help us start a word of mouth campaign to help make the ATL Foundation a recognized name. Ladies Please talk it up. If any one is interested in becoming a volunteer or Friend of the Flock, please contact the ATL webpage. As always thank you for your continued support.

Mark your Calendar

Saturday, July 10th
7th Annual KSL Memorial Motorcycle Ride
Visit our website for more details.
The Act of giving

The times have been challenging lately. We are all well aware. Even if you are feeling secure in your job/career, you are still feeling the effects of the economy and you are diligently watching your spending.

Imagine that in addition to having financial problems you are also battling some health issues. Double Whammy!! This is where the ATL Foundation can assist. Providing assistance in a time of need.

The Friends of the Flock program is a critical component of the ATL Foundation. Friends of the Flock is our sustained giving program. In tough economic times the need is greater. We need you more now than ever. Even though these may be rough times, we can usually all find an extra few bucks every month. Give up the lattes or a dinner out. Some one out there is having a tougher time and could sure use a helping hand!

For as little as $25/month you can become a part of Friends of the Flock. And believe me, $25 means a lot to someone who is truly down and out. For those who are already giving, we thank you and our grant recipients thank you!! We truly appreciate your generosity. With out you, helping those in need would be more challenging. You are making a difference in someone’s life! If you can find a few extra dollars every month and can increase your contribution, please consider it.

The more you give the more you receive……..

For more information on the Friends of the Flock program please feel free to contact Karen Jessey at 303-741-6181.
Looking back over the years....

Where have the last 15 years gone?
Thanks for being there to help!
Thank You !!!! Thank You !!!!

We offer a special thanks to the Denver Women’s Chorus for their kind contribution to the ATL Foundation last year. In honor of their 25th anniversary, GALA, the international Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses, had planned to give the DWC a memento plaque or award recognizing their many years of achievements. But the Denver Women’s Chorus requested the honorarium in the form of money so that they could actively contribute to the ATL Foundation. We are very appreciative of this organization and its endeavor to create community through music as well as its outward focus to further inspire and help women through this monetary gift.

We could never have kept the ATL Foundation going without the support of the members of our community. Special Thank you to all the following:

Woman’s Outdoor Club, The Fuel Team LLC, Colorado Gay Rodeo Association, Terry Teeter, Ceres Foundation, Amy Noel, Susan Davidson, Karen Jessey & J.A. Armstrong, Babes Around Denver LLC, Dr. Rebecca Brinkman, Rex O’Neal, D. Frain, Noble Treasures, Barb Horst’s State Farm Agency, McKesson, Helen Wagner’s State Farm Agency, MotoGear Outlet, Inc. Hammerberg & Assoc. Jean Borg, Susan Boynton’s State Farm Agency, Claudia Morris, Wendy Levy, & Pam Bakeman, Dr. Marianne McCollum, Kenneth Jensen, Lynn Castelo, Lynne Snyder, Wendy Greenberg & Beth Moore, Holly Sahud & Vali Kennelley, Kevin Peterson & Thomas Hanson, Nancy Fritsch, Deborah Westman & Louise Paradis, Cameron Learned, Debra Gray & Marie Valenzuela, Cindy Joos, Yvonne Bacca, Melody Jones, Marna True, Beverly Walz, Linc Golf & Wellness, IREA, Linda French & Sandra Knight, Joni Abel, Kathy Board, Cathi Woodward, Latitude 39, Janet Aguirre, Laura Fischer, James Applegate, Wendy Acheson & Dee Martin, Sheridan C. Walker, Kristin Rich, Sandy Cavanaugh, Tammy Weatherly, Linda Frederickson, Donna Braun, Molly Daniels, Michelle Stecker, Leslie Linville, Dee Whitely & Michelle Borseth, Sara Wheeler, Kathy Bonnerfor, Joan Jones, Paula Walker, Gayle Dumonceaux. All the members of our Friends of the flock giving plan, and all the many names we didn’t have space to list. We could never do it without YOU !!! So if we missed listing your name, please accept our sincere apologies, we appreciate everyone who supports the foundation. From the smallest donor to the largest...Thank You, Thank you, Thank you. You are making a difference in the lives of women in our community, by giving a lift to women in need.

Thank you Friends and advocates who have helped women in need find us and fill out the necessary forms for assistance. And to EVERYONE who contributes to, or participates in our fundraising efforts, we do sincerely thank you!
“Giving a Lift
To Women in Need”

A Colorado 501(c)3 Non-profit corporation

SAVE THE DATE!!!

ATL Foundation Golf Tournament

Arrowhead Golf Club
Friday, August 27, 2010

Shotgun Start 1:30 PM

Get your Foursome Together!!!

ATLFoundation.org

In loving memory of Linda D’Orio