Dr. Henry Sewall began a legacy of inclusion

In 1904, the Victorian home at 1380 Vine Street was purchased by a tuberculosis patient who first arrived in 1891 from Ann Arbor, Michigan who became a physician: Dr. Henry Sewall. Henry and his wife Isabel’s legacy has changed many lives throughout our community history into the Rocky Mountain Region and beyond:

1936: Dr. Sewall dies at age 81; Isabel passes away in 1944. Their home is deeded as Sewall House for Crippled Children & Adults.

1944 to 1960: Sewall House becomes Denver’s first Easter Seals Chapter. The Ladies Auxiliary with the leadership of Juliet Norgren and her local sorority chapter, organize car rides for patients who receive therapies and prosthetic assistance. Volunteers carry patients up narrow stairs in the house.


1963: Current Sewall building is dedicated; named Sewall Rehabilitation Center. It included a hydrotherapy room, a kitchen and laundry set-up to help individuals learn self-sufficiency and independent living, and additional therapy services.

1970s: Sewall Early Education and Development (SEED) profile is developed and disseminated through a nationally funded grant from Handicapped Children’s Early Education Program.

1978: Affiliation with The Children’s Hospital

1980 to 1999: Services offered Hearing Impaired Preschool

1989: Program team considers inclusion as part of the Denver Integrated Preschool Program (DIPP); provides first inclusive consultation to child care centers under the leadership of Executive Director Cheryl Caldwell.

1991: Denver Public Schools receives funding for 3 to 5 year olds with special needs and develops contract with Sewall which is still strong today; Sewall begins an Diagnostic & Evaluation Clinic.

1991: Sewall expands to its first satellite at Bradley Elementary in collaboration with University of Denver (Toni Linder) and DPS; staff is instrumental in piloting Transdisciplinary Play-Based Intervention. D&E Clinic is added to Sewall programs.

1992: Name change to Sewall Child Development Center

1993: Full-day child care services begin

1997: Sewall receives grant to provide Head Start Disability Services to RMSER and DGKHS grantees

2001: Nationally recognized, Sewall and Douglas County Schools are sites for DEC’s Recommended Practices

2007: Board purchases the adjacent tax attorney’s building on corner of 14th and Vine.

2014: Sewall has a total of 6 programs with 9 preschool satellites and Head Start services serving 672 children. REACH charter school approved by the Denver Public School Board June 12, 940 Fillmore purchased August 8.

Under the leadership of CEO Heidi Heissenbuttel and board chair Marc Kleiner, Sewall satellite locations have more than tripled in the past year in partnership with Denver Public Schools. Sewall programs have significantly expanded the reach of inclusionary education throughout Denver.

Numerous families began to request an expansion of Sewall’s education model because of the high-quality of education using an individualized approach.

REACH launched at 940 Fillmore Street (below) in the summer of 2015 after adding an elevator and renovations to the historic landmark school building to make the facility more accessible. Sewall Child Development Center operations moved January 2016. The new facility in the heart of Congress Park is triple the space of 1360 Vine Street.

Sewall House at 1380 Vine Street after it was deeded to aid children and adults with crippling diseases such as polio, cerebral palsy and spina bifida.

REACH is a separate but sister organization to Sewall with some shared resources. For more information, visit REACHpk5.org.

Named REACH, Re-imagining Excellence for All in a Community with Heart, is an approved charter school currently in Year Zero start-up phase; preschool through 2nd grade classes began August 12, 2015 at 940 Fillmore Street. Grades will be added through 5th grade each year.

Committed volunteers assist our mission; more than $1 million (1/3) of Sewall’s budget is from fundraising and grant revenues.

Currently, the Koelbel Building at the Fillmore Street headquarters facility serves as program headquarters for nearly 100 staff working throughout the Denver metro area (see our locations map).