

FOOD BANK

OF THE ROCKIES™

Igniting
Hope and
Nourishing
Neighbors



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FOOD BANK
OF THE ROCKIES™

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An Extraordinary, Singular Year in Food Banking

There's no way to overstate how exceptional this past year was for Food Bank of the Rockies and our 800+ Hunger Relief Partners. Due to near-record inflation levels and the recent end to COVID-era federal support measures, such as monthly SNAP allocation increases, we saw upwards of a 13% increase in the numbers of people served at many of our mobile pantry sites and through our 800+ Hunger Relief Partners. That increase in need included 10% more children, 25% more people in Wyoming, and 21% more people on the Western Slope. What that looked like in practice involved distributing 94 million pounds of food — the equivalent of more than 76 million meals; that's an average of 208,220 meals daily.

We were able to accomplish all of this in fiscal year 2024 thanks to gifts from supporters like you and the hard, dedicated work of our volunteers and staff. In addition, a generous, one-time allocation of federal American Rescue Plan Act funds tremendously bolstered our ability to distribute food.

In May 2023, Food Bank of the Rockies received more than \$6 million in federal funding, allowing us to distribute more than 9 million pounds of high-quality product through the end of June 2024. This funding and the flexibility allowed in implementing those funds enabled us to provide 158 unique food items to 473 Hunger Relief Partners in each of the 32 counties in our Colorado service area that we support.

With that funding now complete, there is a gap between the need across our communities and our ability to continue distributing the same amount of food as last year. Thankfully, Colorado's Joint Budget Committee allocated \$3 million per year in funding across all qualifying emergency food assistance providers in the state for the next five years through House Bill 2024-1407. We are incredibly grateful to the state for approving this legislation, and to Feeding Colorado for leading advocacy efforts in getting the bill passed.

That said, we are again facing an inflection point. With the end of the special federal funding and all pandemic relief funding and assistance programs, coupled with the ever-increasing cost of living including prices for food and beverages being 22% higher in 2024 than 2020, need for food assistance in our area is higher right now than it has been in 10 years. Currently, one in nine people are food insecure in Food Bank of the Rockies' service area, including one in seven kids.

While the causes of food insecurity vary from person to person, the common impact remains: hunger affects every aspect of a person's life, whether that's childhood development, preventing medical issues, or just having the energy to live life fully.

Knowing that good food is essential for a good life, we are doing everything in our power to meet the need and continue the hallmarks of our mission: distributing fresh produce and culturally responsive food, serving as many community members as possible, and listening and responding to community needs. We appreciate our staff, volunteers, Hunger Relief Partners, neighbors, and EACH OF YOU for the partnership, support, and continued belief in our work.

As we head into this new fiscal year, I am certain that we will continue to answer the challenge of hunger together knowing that the work we do is essential for our communities to thrive. Although we're in challenging times, I know we will navigate this with determination and ingenuity to nourish people facing hunger.

With gratitude,



Erin Pulling
Erin Pulling
President & CEO



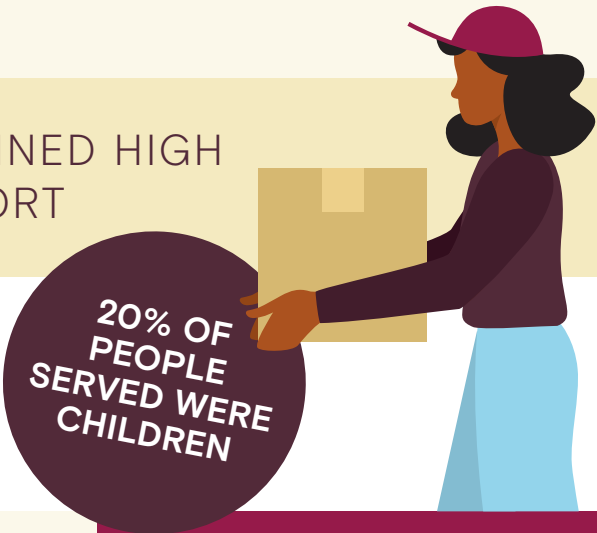
Christina Bowen
Christina Bowen
Board Chair



Fiscal Year 2024

THESE NUMBERS ILLUSTRATE THE SUSTAINED HIGH NEED FOR FOOD AND INNOVATIVE SUPPORT

Neighbors Served 417,317



Total Pounds of Food Distributed
94,133,223

Meal Equivalent for Pounds Distributed
76,091,022



Meals Distributed on Average Per Day
208,220

Percentage of Pounds Distributed that was Fresh Produce



29%

Service Area Covered
150,000
SQUARE MILES

Largest food bank distribution area in the contiguous U.S.



Volunteer Hours Logged
148,398

The equivalent of 71 full-time employees



How We Help

Hunger cuts across demographics and borders, indifferent to the past or future chapters of a person's life. Food Bank of the Rockies meets individuals in the present, ensuring that anyone who needs it gets the nourishing food they need to thrive.



Where Food Comes From

Over 96% of funding goes directly into our hunger-relief programs and supports all of the ways we attain food to distribute to our community members.



Sorting and Packing Food for our Neighbors



Each year, more than 18,000 volunteers help us sort, pack, and get food into the hands of our neighbors across Colorado and Wyoming. We could not do this work without their dedication and generosity!

Distributing Food to our Communities



We deploy 70+ refrigerated semitrailers each month to urban and rural communities throughout Colorado and Wyoming to bring food directly to where it is needed most.

The 800+ pantries, programs, and relief organizations we support through food and resources to nourish people experiencing hunger in their communities.

Specialized programming for after-school, summer, and weekend meals for children.

Monthly food boxes administered by the USDA at no cost to income-qualifying older adults at least 60 years of age.

Weekly food boxes delivered to patients who screen positive for food insecurity to help improve health and nutrition.



Looking Ahead

We are hopeful for a day when Food Bank of the Rockies is no longer needed and everyone has enough nourishing food and resources to thrive. But until then, we will keep pioneering more impactful, fulfilling ways to meet the needs of our community members.

FEATURE

Bringing

FOOD FROM LOCAL FARMS

*to
Local Families*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN BOGGS



When Sheri became the guardian of her grandson, Zackariah, she knew that she was not only responsible for his mental and emotional well-being, but also his physical health. That included his diet and ensuring he has consistent access to fresh, high-quality, diverse foods that help him grow, learn, and thrive versus less nutrient-rich, pre-packaged snacks and meals.

“Zackariah comes from an abusive home and, as a way to cope with the abuse he’s experienced, he turned to food,” Sheri explained. “That led to him having type 2 diabetes and being bullied for his weight. I can’t stand to see him being made fun of for any reason, especially when the roots of his weight gain are in response to abuse, so I’m doing my best to teach him to cook and eat a more balanced diet.”

these types of food are becoming less and less attainable for many community members. The grandma and grandson also volunteer at the mobile pantry; it’s their way of giving back for all they’ve received, said Sheri.

People begin lining up in their cars as early as 3:00 a.m. for the mobile pantry, which doesn’t officially begin until 9:00 a.m.

“It’s typical for us to have a line of cars waiting to get food until noon or later,” said Jackie Feaster, Executive Director of the Clifton Christian Church Food Bank and coordinator of the mobile pantry. “The majority of people who attend the mobile pantry have jobs and homes but can’t afford enough food to be nourished. That’s where we come in.”



Our partnership with Food Bank of the Rockies gives us security here on the farm knowing that we are able to sell the produce we grow. It means we’re not throwing away [surplus] good food that we couldn’t sell – that somebody is getting to eat that food.

– Tony, Austin Family Farm

A former chef, Sheri knows her way around a kitchen and has taught Zackariah the basics of creating well-rounded meals. For his part, Zackariah now recognizes that it’s important to be intentional about what he eats and enjoys being as helpful to his grandma as he can be in the kitchen and out.

One way Sheri and Zackariah can get the nutritious produce and proteins needed to maintain both of their health is through Food Bank of the Rockies’ monthly mobile pantry at Clifton Christian Church. There, they are among the more than 500 households who attend the distributions on the third Saturday of the month to supplement their incomes and diets with locally sourced fruits and vegetables, lean protein, pantry staples, and more. With persistent inflation,

Food insecurity rates on the Western Slope are currently higher than they have been for a decade, with one in eight people — including one in seven kids — experiencing food insecurity. To reach these individuals and ensure our communities get the nourishment they need to live full lives, Food Bank of the Rockies partners with hunger-relief organizations like Clifton Christian Church Food Bank and sources as much food from local growers and ranchers as possible — a win-win-win for Western Slope farmers, the local economy, and the people who receive this food.

One of those local growers is Austin Family Farm in Paonia, a four-generation, family-owned-and-operated farm that grows fruit and vegetables, raises chickens for meat and eggs, and produces honey.



TOP: People start lining up for the mobile pantry at Clifton Christian Church hours before the distribution begins, highlighting the need in Western Slope communities.

BOTTOM: Zackariah and his grandmother, Sheri, volunteer at and receive food from Clifton Christian Church Mobile Pantry.

Located on top of a hill overlooking three mountain peaks, the views from the farm are as incredible as the food they grow sustainably. Glenn, the patriarch of the family, and Tony, the matriarch, have dedicated their entire lives to farming, even when they weren't able to make a full-time living with it.

"I was born to farm," shared Glenn as he leaned against his tractor and watched his grandson, Eric, and great-grandson, Jack, walk among the apple trees. "It's an addiction. It's in my blood."

Until he was able to purchase his own farm and dedicate his days to transforming the landscape into the oasis it is today, Glenn worked numerous odd jobs. Coal mining, teaching elementary school, raising cattle, renting and working other people's farms: he did whatever it took to support his family while never abandoning his passion for growing.

That same passion is seen today in his grandsons and great-grandkids — something that brings immense joy to Glenn and Tony. Another thing that brings them joy is knowing that the food they so lovingly grow helps nourish people who might not otherwise be able to afford it thanks to their partnership with Mountain Freshies and Food Bank of the Rockies.

Mountain Freshies is one of two food hubs on the Western Slope that Food Bank of the Rockies partners with. The function of food hubs is to be an aggregator for smaller-scale farmers, providing them with transportation and access to markets that would otherwise be unattainable. Food Bank of the Rockies' role in these relationships is to purchase food from the hubs to get it onto the tables of families experiencing food insecurity.

In addition to Austin Family Farm, Food Bank of the Rockies in fiscal year 2024 sourced food from 25 other growers across the Western Slope. In total, the



Food Bank purchased nearly 855,000 pounds of produce from Western Slope producers.

“When we grow our food, we have other people in mind,” shared Tony. “We have been so incredibly blessed; I’ve never had to go hungry in my life, but I know other people do. To be able to help feed those people is very rewarding. I think people that have enough food feel secure. And I think that’s very important, especially for children. I’ve seen the result of children

going hungry and being malnourished, and I don’t like that. It’s very rewarding to know that children have the proper nutrition in part thanks to what we grow here.”

“Additionally, our partnership with Food Bank of the Rockies gives us security here on the farm knowing that we are able to sell the produce we grow,” Tony continued. “It means we’re not throwing away [surplus] good food that we couldn’t sell — that somebody is getting to eat that food.”

While the Austins don’t personally know Sheri and Zackariah, and Sheri and Zackariah don’t know the Austins, the gratitude and feelings of security are mutual. From nourishing the soil in which nutrient-dense fruits and vegetables grow to nourishing families in need of that food, the cycle of supporting one another through food is a priceless gift that, thanks to the generosity of supporters, Food Bank of the Rockies is able to nurture every day of every year. 🌱



Four generations live on Austin Family Farm, where together they nurture the land and grow food to help nourish others.

How the Food Rescue Program FEEDS OUR COMMUNITY

FROM DAY ONE, Food Bank of the Rockies has built its programming on rescuing food and getting it into the hands of people who need it. Our founder, Kathy Hackwith Groth, started picking up bread from area stores to distribute to people in need and, in 1978, started the Colorado Food Clearing House. Today, around half of the food Food Bank of the Rockies distributes annually is rescued. In fiscal year 2024, that amounted to nearly 47 million pounds of food — the equivalent of 39 million meals.

The goal of the Food Rescue Program is to make sure as little high-quality, nutrient-dense food goes to waste as possible. By bringing together a wide-ranging network of community partners to collect and distribute this food to local community members experiencing food insecurity, we are able to be good stewards of the environment while also nourishing our neighbors with the food they need to thrive.

Included in our food rescue network are over 880 retail locations for chains like King Soopers, Walmart, Target, Sprouts, and Starbucks. Additionally, we work with a myriad of other food businesses such as major distributors like Shamrock, Amazon,

KeHE, and US Foods; farms and ranches; local manufacturers such as Mountain View Foods and Pepperidge Farm; and more.

Benefitting from the Food Rescue Program are our 800-plus Hunger Relief Partners, including nonprofit organizations like The Action Center in Lakewood, Colorado, as well as the more than 70 mobile pantries Food Bank of the Rockies operates across our service area.

The process works like this: Our Hunger Relief Partners can send their own drivers to pick up the surplus food directly from select retailers or place an online order with Food Bank of the Rockies' distribution center. Alternatively, the Food Bank sends out its own team of Food Rescue drivers to pick up donations from across the food-supply chain. Once the food reaches our distribution center, volunteers sort, itemize, and repackage it for pick-up or delivery.

Access to this food is one of the major perks of being a Hunger Relief Partner of Food Bank of the Rockies, said Jennifer Stone, Product Operations Manager for The Action Center, which also offers its clients rental and utility assistance, access to a clothing bank, and family coaching.



The Action Center is one of hundreds of partners that benefit from surplus food available through the Food Rescue Program.
/ Photo by Phil Milani

Among The Action Center's most desired donated food items are fresh produce, dairy, and eggs, shared Stone, but they also appreciate when they can order nutritious grab-and-go foods for clients to take and eat without needing access to refrigeration or cooking appliances.

"I think it's exciting for our community to be able to broaden their palates and try different foods they are not normally able to purchase," Stone said. "For instance, we receive a lot of items from Whole Foods grocery rescue, and these are simply too expensive for our community members to purchase regularly. It's great to see faces light up in our self-select grocery area when community members find food items they have been looking for or see new foods they've never tried."

Many of the Food Bank's larger donation partners, like Kroger, parent company of King Soopers and City Market, have an established relationship with Feeding America and work with its affiliated food

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It's great to see faces light up in our self-select grocery area when community members find food items they have been looking for or see new foods they've never tried.

—Jennifer Stone,
Product Operations Manager for The Action Center

bank partners, like Food Bank of the Rockies, to execute their grocery rescue strategy.

According to Jessica Trowbridge, Corporate Affairs Manager for King Soopers, Food Bank of the Rockies' Food Rescue Program aligns closely with Kroger's Zero Hunger, Zero Waste mission to end hunger in local communities and promote sustainability.

"This program is incredible — it touches our community in so many ways and it takes the work of so many people," Trowbridge said. "Food rescue helps King Soopers make sure that any surplus food [...] ends

up on plates and helps provide people in our community with nutritious food to eat."

The Food Rescue Program has also been an important element of The Action Center's overall food-relief program, shared Carolyn Alexander, Senior Director of Operations at the nonprofit.

"Food Bank of the Rockies provides the backbone and coordination of all of our grocery rescue efforts," she said. "They assign the retail stores and pick-up days to the various agency partners and provide support if there are issues or modifications needed."



While the ultimate purpose of the Food Rescue Program is to provide essential food aid to community organizations and neighbors, the program also reduces carbon emissions by steering surplus food away from landfills, promoting environmental sustainability, and bolstering donation partners' corporate sustainability goals. In fiscal year 2024, the

program prevented nearly 10,000 metric tons of CO2 emissions from entering the atmosphere. That's equivalent to greenhouse gas emissions from 2,380 gasoline-powered passenger vehicles driven for one year. This and the program's other successes over the years are thanks to strong community partnerships forged with local nonprofits and retailers.

"Rescuing food has been part of [the Food Bank's] DNA from the beginning, but we couldn't do the work we do without having great partners across the food ecosystem helping to provide the surplus food we use to feed folks in need," said Mark Weslar, Food Sourcing Director at Food Bank of the Rockies. "It's really a collaborative web of people working to make it happen." 🌱

THE FOOD RESCUE JOURNEY



- 1 Food is donated by retail stores, manufacturers, and agricultural partners.
- 2 Rescued food is picked up and taken to Food Bank of the Rockies' distribution center.
- 3 Volunteers sort the food.
- 4 Rescued food is delivered to people facing food insecurity.

Making a Difference One Hour at a Time



Dedicating their time, energy, and compassion to helping people experiencing hunger, our volunteers play an integral role in fulfilling Food Bank of the Rockies' mission.

When we say we can't do what we do without our dedicated, hard-working volunteers, we aren't exaggerating. In fiscal year 2024, volunteers donated more than 148,390 hours — the equivalent of 71 full-time employees. That's a 31% increase in volunteer hours over the previous year — a truly incredible gift of time, energy, and compassion.

Landis has donated over 1,500 hours to Food Bank of the Rockies.

"Food is always important; no one should have to worry about their food sources," Landis shared. "Food is important in my life, too. I love cooking, most of my kids love cooking. It's something we've always done to share and connect with each other. Food is a connection to the greater community, part of the greater good."



We are so grateful to all our volunteers who choose to spend their valuable time furthering our cause of igniting the power of community to end hunger, and each year we select individual volunteers and groups to honor for their gift. Please join us in celebrating the efforts of this year's volunteer award recipients.

A life-long volunteer, Janet Landis is this year's Betty Van Hook Memorial Award recipient, an honor given to a volunteer who embodies Betty's zeal, passion, and commitment to our mission. Since 2017,

Twice a week since 2022, students from Northeast Early College's Transition to Independence (TIP) and Community Plus programs have volunteered with Food Bank of the Rockies. This year's Community Group of the Year, the students help nourish their neighbors while learning valuable life skills and, in two years, have donated over 1,190 hours.

"Food Bank of the Rockies is perfect because there are so many other people the students can interact with; they can be in a community and have responsibility," shared Liz Sunderland, a TIP special education teacher. "Several students have friends or family members who have used food banks in the past, so they know exactly what that's like and what their volunteering is going toward. They know that this is helping people."



At least once a year, Empower employees organize a "food bank month" and dedicate their volunteer hours to nourishing their neighbors. Several employees also opt to spend their free time volunteering at



NORTHEAST EARLY COLLEGE TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE AND COMMUNITY PLUS PROGRAMS



EMPOWER



ARIEL CLINICAL SERVICES



ALPINE BANK

Food Bank of the Rockies. Since 2015, the organization, which was named this year's Corporate Group of the Year, has donated over 2,240 hours.

"People are really passionate about Food Bank of the Rockies and helping in its mission. It's so tangible," said Grace Randazzo, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager at Empower. "Hunger isn't something that cares about where you came from or what you look like. Our employees enjoy the opportunity to do something that has a direct impact."

Alan Dickman knew that he wanted to dedicate his time to volunteering once he retired. And he's done just that: Since 2021, Dickman has donated more than 670 hours to Food Bank of the Rockies. In 2024, his commitment and enthusiasm

led him to being named the Rising Volunteer of the Year.

"I wanted to do something that wouldn't just benefit me, but that was really impactful," Dickman shared. "You can see how much it's helping people. It's a privilege to do this work."

At the Etkin Family Distribution Center on the Western Slope, sisters Dianne Terry and Lynn Edwards were chosen as the 2024 Rising Volunteers of the Year thanks to their collective donation of more than 300 hours of volunteerism since July 2023. Dave White, Western Slope Volunteer of the Year, has donated more than 250 hours since March 2023, and shared, "My favorite thing about volunteering is the feeling when you walk in the door for every shift that you are

quietly helping make a difference toward the endless gap to help people in need."

Alpine Bank was selected as the 2024 Corporate Group of the Year for the Western Slope; more than 10 of their employees regularly volunteer to help nourish their neighbors. And every Monday since 2021, 12 employees from Ariel Clinical Services come to the distribution center to volunteer. In that time, they have donated more than 2,000 hours. We recognize and thank them for their gift as this year's Community Group of the Year.

With every hour donated, every box packed, and every pallet of food distributed, there are fewer people experiencing hunger in our community. Thank you so much, volunteers. We couldn't do this work without you. 🌱

Supporting Our Community with Generosity and Dedication

GROWING UP ON A FARM

in a small town in North Dakota's Red River Valley, Linda Trenbeath was raised in a community that believed in helping and sharing. Need extra chairs for a dinner party? Ask a neighbor. Have too many cucumbers from your backyard garden? Share them with the neighbors.

That ethos stuck with her throughout her life and career, eventually leading her, alongside her husband, to become a regular donor to Food Bank of the Rockies since 2020. This includes gifts to the Food Bank throughout the year through her IRA.

"Donating to Food Bank of the Rockies is an essential gift for an essential need — an essential gift that helps the human being," Linda shared. "And with the meeting of that basic need comes the building of a person's self-respect. When you work with people in need from any culture, you will find that if they cannot help their family get the food they need, particularly their children or their elders, they feel terrible. Food gives them a sense of self-respect."

At every job Linda worked, she found ways to give back to her community. As an account executive for a marketing company, she developed communications for the nonprofit community. As a nonprofit marketing professional, she helped promote a program at Boulder Memorial Hospital that dedicated a floor of the hospital to people needing occupational therapy

for real-life situations. A "pseudo" village was created complete with a bus stop, grocery market, and bank. And as an education ambassador for older adults, Linda partnered with health providers in hospice care and adult day programs to improve the lives of clients and caregivers.

Outside of work, Linda continued to find ways big and small to help the people around her. First and foremost, she sought out places that supported people with food.

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Food is meant to bring people together, and people are meant to come together. It builds community.

— Linda Trenbeath

"Food is meant to bring people together, and people are meant to come together. It builds community," she said. "I believe in a reciprocal universe, and I'm a big believer in supporting women and children. When I see what poverty does to single women — to their family and themselves, where they can't even take care of their personal hygiene needs or their medical needs — that really moves me. So my giving is more than in the food area, but in supporting the whole of a person."

Instilling that same sense of community and the importance of giving back in her two kids' lives fuels Neelima Joshi's

dedication to volunteering with, donating to, and serving as Food Bank of the Rockies' newest board member. She and her kids, Sohan and Indi, moved to Denver shortly before the COVID pandemic hit and, as soon as restrictions were lifted, she started looking for volunteer opportunities the three of them could do together. That's when she found the Food Bank.

"Food is something people understand. Physically, we're unpacking thousands of pounds of food every volunteer session," Neelima said. "It's easy for a child to grasp when we're moving the apples from large boxes to smaller boxes and they're going to go to a school or a pantry for other people to have. It's an immediate impact."

Neelima's eldest, Sohan, especially understands the importance and impact of food. During COVID, he started baking and posting his creations on Instagram. Unlike the majority of people who dug into the art of sourdough bread and pastries during lockdown, his posts were noticed by The Food Network and, after an extensive vetting process, he was featured on the network's "Kids Baking Championship" show. His favorite place to volunteer at Food Bank of the Rockies? The kitchen.

"Food is important. Access to food for all is very important and everyone needs it," Neelima shared. "For us personally, with the kids so involved with food and my eldest's business and being on the TV show, it was a natural fit for us to volunteer with the Food Bank."



“

Food is important. Access to food for all is very important and everyone needs it.

– Neelima Joshi

Recognizing the impact of the work they do while volunteering has become an ongoing conversation between Neelima and her children.

“I love how after every volunteer session, you hear the impact of how many meals you provided and how many people you helped feed. On the drive home, we talk about where the food is going and who’s getting it,” she shared. “Indi tells their friends how much fun volunteering is. At the end of the shift, Indi always exclaims, ‘This is so fun!’ then goes home to tell a friend to come with us to volunteer next time.”

No matter how, when, or why people choose to support Food Bank of the Rockies, every hour and dollar gifted means that members of our community will have access to the nourishing food they need to thrive. Or, as Linda put it: “When we give AND receive, we are connected and sustained.” 🌱

TOP: Food Bank of the Rockies board member and supporter Neelima Joshi and her kids regularly volunteer at the Denver Distribution Center.

BOTTOM: Donor Linda Trenbeath grew up in a community that valued sharing and helping, and continues to live by those values to this day.



NEELIMA JOSHI AND HER KIDS, INDI (L) AND SOHAN (R) JHAVERI



LINDA TRENBEATH

Finding Support During Times of Need



Mose and Patty

Delta, CO

Mose and Patty have been neighbors in Cedaredge, Colorado, for five years. Since moving into her home, Patty has taken it upon herself to make sure Mose, who is 90 years old and no longer drives, always has enough to eat. She takes him to get groceries and run errands and, on a hot summer day, she drove him to the Delta Mobile Pantry to get food for the month.

“Someone at the health department told us about the distribution, and I like knowing that he has enough to eat,” said Patty. “He does so much better when he eats. I’m so glad Food Bank of the Rockies does this – thank you so much. It’s amazing that you do this.”



**I’m so glad Food Bank of the Rockies
does this. It’s amazing.**



Paula

Denver, CO



**I have to eat right, and I love
the food they give us.**

Paula worked full-time until age 65. Currently, she receives the lowest SNAP benefits provided — \$23 a month — and relies on her local Food Bank of the Rockies mobile pantry to get the food she needs. When we met her, she was in recovery from sepsis and shared that the nutritious food she gets from the Food Bank is critical in her healing.

“I have to eat right, and I love all the food they give us. I also applied to be a proxy, because I live in a senior citizen independent retirement community and some people don’t have cars or just can’t get up at this time of day. I take home a little more food and also set out what I can’t use. It’s usually gone in 10 minutes.”



Anyone can experience food insecurity. Hunger cuts across demographics and borders, indifferent to the past or future chapters of a person's life. Food Bank of the Rockies meets individuals in the present, ensuring that anyone who needs it gets the nourishing food they need to thrive.



Brie and Dasja

Rawlins, WY

Brie and her daughter, Dasja, live near one another in Rawlins, Wyoming, and do everything together, including get food at WYO HELP, a Hunger Relief Partner of Food Bank of the Rockies that operates using a client-choice shopping model. Dasja has Crohn's disease, is on disability, and is a stay-at-home mom. She shared that the food they get from the food pantry helps them make ends meet.

"I'm always trying to cook different meals for my daughter, so this really helps out. The meat is especially good because you can portion it out and freeze it. They have a lot of chicken, turkey, fish, which is good for Crohn's disease. It all helps a lot."



The meat is especially good because you can freeze it. It all helps a lot.



Jennifer

Denver, CO



I hope to give back and make a positive impact in my community.

Jennifer is a college student and visited the Fresh Thanks Grocery Distribution hosted by Food Bank of the Rockies Hunger Relief Partner Integrated Family Community Services before Thanksgiving last year. She explained that she was there to get food for the holiday so that her family could enjoy a meal. Her dad's work hours had been cut, which caused Jennifer's family to struggle to put sufficient food on the table.

"My family is super excited about having turkey this year; my siblings have been talking about it for months. When I graduate, I hope to give back and make a positive impact in my community by becoming a social worker."

Addressing Food Insecurity and Chronic Illness through the Food for Health Program

EVERY DAY, each of us makes endless choices, from what to wear to when to go to bed. One choice all of us face daily? What to eat.

For the majority of people, this decision involves answering one main question: What do I want to eat today? But for one in nine individuals in Colorado and one in seven people in Wyoming, that choice isn't so simple. For those folks, the question isn't just what to eat, but, "Can I afford to eat today?" Complicating matters even further for many people in that position are chronic health issues like hypertension and pre-diabetes — conditions that often coincide with food

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If the program wasn't available and [the Food Bank] couldn't deliver, I would be at a loss.

— Sherri, a program participant

insecurity due to a lack of access to nutrient-rich, affordable foods.

As part of our mission to meet every person facing hunger where and how they need us, Food Bank of the Rockies in 2022 launched the Food for Health Program.

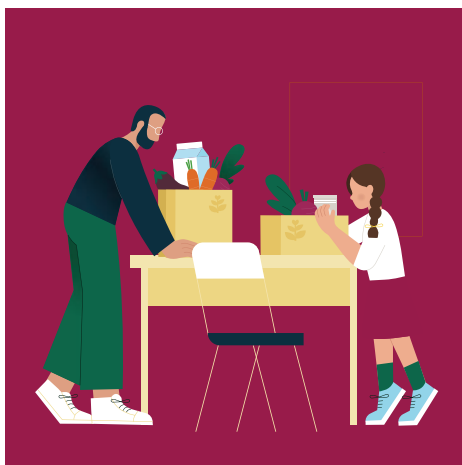
The program is designed to connect community members experiencing food insecurity and chronic illnesses dependent upon dietary management with consistent access to food tailored to their medical situations. In partnership with five medical centers in the Denver metro area — Denver Health, Denver Indian Health and Family Services, St. Anthony North, Lutheran Medical Center, and Platte Valley Medical Center — as of the close of fiscal year 2024, the Food for Health Program has provided more than 270 people with weekly, medically tailored food boxes curated with the guidance of a registered dietician.

Chuck Ault, Community Health Manager for Intermountain Health, the parent organization of Lutheran Medical Center and Platte Valley Medical Center, was thrilled to learn about the Food for Health Program in 2022 and immediately reached out to the Food Bank to become a partner. Ault's team had begun exploring options to implement "food as medicine" programming into their work in 2019, but their plans were derailed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Becoming a Food for Health partner was especially appealing to Ault for two reasons: Food Bank of the Rockies

Sherri is able to better manage her diabetes and high blood pressure thanks to the Food for Health Program.





organizes the food box preparation and delivery and follows up with patients; and providing food to patients is an almost immediate solution.

“The biggest plus for us is that, in virtually every domain of that social determinant screening, when the person says, ‘Yes, I struggle with that,’ we don’t have a response beyond a referral that may or may not pan out for that person,” explained Ault. “With this, we directly connect them to Food Bank of the Rockies and within a week to 10 days, they receive their first box of food. It’s an almost instantaneous response to that need.”

The Food for Health Program works as follows. Once a person visits a Food Bank of the Rockies healthcare partner and screens positive for food insecurity

and one of the four chronic diseases for which food acts as medicine — pre-diabetes, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and hypertension — they can choose to be contacted by the Food Bank to learn more and sign up as a Food for Health participant for 12 months. After signing up, they receive a weekly food box packed with fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, grains, dairy, herbs, spices, and recipes. Food Bank of the Rockies connects with 100% of people referred to the program.

“Eighty-to-ninety percent of a person’s health is determined outside of clinical walls,” shared Monica Buhlig, Food Bank of the Rockies Chief Programs Officer. “The best healthcare alone cannot assure our communities are healthy and thriving; that requires partnerships. Food

“

Food for Health makes choosing nutritious food a possibility for people living with food insecurity and chronic health issues.

– Monica Buhlig,
Food Bank of the Rockies
Chief Programs Officer

Bank of the Rockies is proud to be that partner. Food for Health makes choosing nutritious food a possibility for people living with food insecurity and chronic health issues.”

Sherri, a program participant, has diabetes and high blood pressure and must carefully watch her calorie intake and blood sugar levels. Through Food for Health, she incorporated nutrient-dense meals and snacks into her diet to improve her health.

“On the days when I couldn’t get out and I’d have food delivered, I’d have something that I needed,” Sherri shared. “If the program wasn’t available and [the Food Bank] couldn’t deliver, I would be at a loss.”

Most Food for Health clients share Sherri’s experience. Of program participants, 95% reported that it helped them feel more food secure and helped them maintain or decrease their blood pressure.

For Ault, the impact of the program goes beyond the initial 12-month enrollment.

“Food is a piece of the economics of the whole picture of a person’s life. We’re hoping to see tangible improvements in health, yes, but also mental health,” he said. “If food is one thing that falls off that massive to-do list, how does that improve how a person feels and open up space for them to focus on other areas of their health? We’ve heard really positive feedback along those lines: ‘Wow, this makes a difference. This makes my life easier and less stressful.’ And that’s huge.” 🌱



Board Members

Board Members as of October 2024

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Marylou Houston
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Raju Patel
Treasurer

Sean Choi
Secretary

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Leadership Team

- Monica Buhlig**, Chief Programs Officer
- Heather MacKendrick Costa**, Chief Financial Officer
- Melinda Day**, Chief Impact Officer
- Aditi Desai**, Chief Marketing Officer
- Kelly Green**, Chief Operating Officer
- Steve Kullberg**, Chief of Staff
- Jennifer Lackey**, Chief Development Officer
- Erin Pulling**, President & CEO
- Lorena Toland**, Chief People Officer





Taking Action Against Hunger, Together

Numbers don't always tell a full story, but when it comes to food insecurity rates in Colorado, Wyoming, and the nation as a whole, the message is clear: people are hurting.

The most recent USDA data released in September 2024 showed that 47 million people — including nearly 14 million children — are experiencing food insecurity in the U.S. This is a 6% increase from the previous year and the highest number of individuals and children facing hunger since 2014. Here in Colorado, one in nine people and one in seven kids face hunger. In Wyoming, those rates are even more concerning, with one in seven people and one in five kids experiencing food insecurity.

Food insecurity exists in every county in our nation, from the poorest neighborhoods to the most affluent. Being forced to choose between having enough food to eat and paying for all of life's other necessities is an unfortunate reality for many of our Colorado and Wyoming neighbors — and it's becoming more common for more people every day.

We never thought we'd be seeing this dire of a need following COVID, but here we are. There's no denying the severity of the situation we currently face, and we are doing everything in our power to address it head on as we always do. But we can't do that without each and every one of you. Your support — through donations, volunteering, and spreading the word about hunger in our community — enables us to continue to show up every day for our neighbors. Thank you for supporting us, especially during these challenging times. We are so grateful to and for you. 🌱



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