



Nourishing Bodies and Hearts with Familiar Foods

Providing nourishment entails more than delivering nutritionally rich foods to clients. To nourish someone is to fill them not only on a physical level, but on an emotional one as well.

With that mission in mind—to fulfill our clients' wants as well as their needs—Food Bank of the Rockies and Food Bank of Wyoming launched the Culturally Responsive Food Initiative (CRFI) in August 2020, designed to tailor food options to the cultural food preferences of clients.

"Food security should include providing foods that people are comfortable with, know what to do with, are used to eating, and mean something to them," noted Avalon Guarino, Programs Outreach Representative on the Western Slope for Food Bank of the Rockies. "For a long time, food security has

just been putting more calories on plates. It's important to provide food that people would choose to eat."

To find out which foods are most desired by the different cultural groups served by Food Bank of the Rockies, we surveyed hundreds of clients, local organizations, and agencies about demographics, food recommendations, and preferred communication channels. Using that data, customized cultural food lists were developed and, once acquired, items were made available for distribution through our Hunger Relief Partners.

The initial pilot program lasted nine months and served eight counties. Now in its second phase, CRFI will serve the Food Bank's entire 53-county region in Colorado and Wyoming.

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Culturally responsive foods began to be available during the 2020 holiday season and immediately garnered an enthusiastic response. A Food Bank of the Rockies staff member attending December's mobile pantry in Fort Morgan said it was extra special because the boxes included masa flour, tortillas, beans, and rice. "This area is dominantly Hispanic, so during the holidays it is always such a huge blessing to have [ingredients to make] tamales," she said. "To tailor these boxes to the community provides clients with a sense of home."

**Inspired to learn more about our programs?
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A child receives a free, nutritious, kid-friendly meal that was prepared and safely sealed in Food Bank of the Rockies' commercial kitchen. Photo: Caitlyn Barnett

From the CEO's Desk

Since March 2020, when life as we knew it was upended by COVID-19, our focus at Food Bank of the Rockies has been serving our partners and clients with tenacity and strength. The need for food in our service areas has increased by upwards of 60-80% over the last 15 months, and we were able to meet that demand thanks to generous donors, grants, government programs, and the time and effort of our incredible volunteers and staff members. We cannot express our gratitude enough.

As restrictions are lifted, it would be easy to think that the burden of food insecurity would also be lifted off the shoulders of our fellow community members; however, this is not the case for many. Unemployment levels continue to hover around 6%. Grocery, home, and gas prices have skyrocketed. Food insecurity levels are soaring. According to Feeding America, more than 42 million people in the U.S. are expected to experience food insecurity in 2021. In Colorado and Wyoming, one in eight people struggle with hunger.

Since 2019, Food Bank of the Rockies has quadrupled its food purchasing budget. As of

June 2021, this includes purchasing 1.2 million pounds of produce every month with our new FRESH program, which has replaced the USDA Coronavirus Food Assistance Program that ended in May 2021. Additionally, we are expanding our Culturally Responsive Food Initiative to include our entire 53-county service area, bringing mobile pantries to more communities, and developing new programs to ensure Food Bank of the Rockies remains sustainable and effective.

The pandemic is not yet over for the millions of people who experience food insecurity. To help us serve others with the greatest impact possible, please consider donating to or volunteering with Food Bank of the Rockies. Every dollar, every hour counts in countering the challenge of hunger. Thank you so much for your support; we couldn't do any of it without you.

Gratefully,
Erin Pulling

President & CEO
Food Bank of the Rockies



Distribution Centers

Denver

10700 E. 45th Avenue
Denver, CO 80239
303-371-9250

Western Slope

120 North River Road
Palisade, CO 81526
970-464-1138

Wyoming

5150 Reserve Drive, Suite 2
Evansville, WY 82636
307-265-2172

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This institution is an equal
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Thai Nguyen started Kaizen Food Rescue in 2019 as a response to an overwhelming need for food in our communities. Photo: Caitlyn Barnett

Meeting Communities Where They Are

If you ask Thai Nguyen how she manages to do all the things that she does—be a mother to three kids, oversee the operations of Kaizen Food Rescue, invest in her community—she'll smile and shrug the question off. She just does. Simple as that.

However, nothing about Thai's work is simple. In fact, it's complex and extremely powerful, especially to the more than 2,300 families to whom she and her team of volunteers provide culturally relevant food every week.

"We can see the vulnerability in the systems on which we currently depend because our volunteers are individuals who are also looking for help," Thai explained. "Food Bank of the Rockies has been instrumental in helping us provide equitable food access, which centers our community members, enables them to solve issues around food justice, and helps us grow toward food sovereignty."

Thai founded Kaizen Food Rescue in 2019. Today, it is one of Food Bank of the Rockies' largest Hunger Relief Partners, distributing an average of 59 tons of food sourced from the Food Bank every week.

Since its founding, Kaizen Food Rescue has paved the way in providing culturally relevant food to the communities it serves in the areas that need it most: namely BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities and food deserts.

By staffing food share sites with volunteers who reflect the community, Kaizen Food Rescue also seeks to ensure that all clients feel welcome and empowered. Many volunteers are also clients. "It builds a circular type of service," Thai said. "It also helps to destigmatize receiving free food while providing dignity to people."

Learn more about Food Bank of the Rockies' Hunger Relief Partners and programs at foodbankrockies.org/about/programs.



Give Monthly

Become a FEED365 monthly donor to Food Bank of the Rockies and nourish your community each and every day. A gift of \$25 a month helps provide 100 meals to our neighbors facing hunger. Learn more at foodbankrockies.org/summer.

Meet Kate Budd, Mobile Pantries Representative

Serving as Food Bank of the Rockies' Mobile Pantries Representative is a full-circle experience for Kate Budd. "I have relatives who benefited from food banks growing up," she explained. "I'm adopted, and my family's mantra is that talent is evenly distributed, but opportunity is not. When you have the opportunity to create opportunity, it's important that you do."

Kate grew up in Dallas and moved to Denver in January 2020 to work at the Food Bank. In her role, she places orders for all 70-plus mobile pantry sites, which involves sourcing items to complement items provided by The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). "If a box has peanut butter, I'll order jelly—that sort of thing," she said.

Kate also looks up recipes that use the included food items and seeks input from the site coordinators to identify the specific needs of each community.

"It is my goal to empower our volunteer site coordinators and show our clients respect by creating thoughtful food options," Kate said. "It's important to create an experience that feels mutually beneficial for everyone. We need to normalize asking for help because everyone needs help."



For Kate Budd, tailoring the offerings of each mobile pantry site reflects how Food Bank of the Rockies is building relationships. "It's a two-way conversation," she said. Photo: Caitlyn Barnett



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Placement of
Endicia

Mailing Address
City, State Zip

FOOD BANK OF THE ROCKIES™

Hunger challenges our neighbors every day. With support from individuals like you, we are able to provide help to anyone who finds themselves in need. Discover inspiring stories of how together we are igniting the power of community in our newsletter.

We work daily to provide equitable access to proper nourishment for all.

