



Most Fridays in June and July, around 40 families pick up food for the weekend after the final bell rings at Leawood Elementary School. Over a third of the students at the school qualify for the National School Lunch Program.

Nourishing Kids All Summer Long

Fridays are superhero day at Leawood Elementary School. As soon as the bell rings, kids with colorful costumes flood out the doors as their teachers — many of whom are also festively outfitted — wave goodbye.

While they aren't dressed like it, the real superheroes of the day are the Kiwanis Club of Columbine volunteers who are there, bravely bearing the midday heat to pack and distribute bags of food for families who need a little extra help to get to Monday.

"It helps a lot, especially if we're busy or missing a meal for a day," said Jamie, whose daughters eagerly helped carry the bags of food to the car. "This helps us get through the weekend."

The Kiwanis Club of Columbine started organizing this distribution last year after being approached by Allison Taggart, a

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program director for Integrated Family Community Services (IFCS).

"We had the van, the coolers, and the space, but we didn't have the people power," said Taggart. "So I asked the Kiwanis Club if they'd help. They signed up right away. And I mean, look at them!" She pointed to the tent and tables the volunteers had set up to organize and pack the food. "Without them, we wouldn't be able to do it."

Over a third of Leawood students qualify for the free-and-reduced-lunch program. To ensure kids who need food have access to it during the summer, IFCS coordinates with The Action Center, a

Hunger Relief Partner of Food Bank of the Rockies, to source food. On this particular Friday, the bags include eggs, string cheese, Cheerios, ground beef, carrots, corn, grapefruit, tortillas, black beans, and more. The whole operation is part of the Jeffco Summer of Early Learning Program (JSEL), which aims to provide groceries to low-income families every June and July.

"I like volunteering because I know I'm helping a lot of people get some food on the table," said Ferris Forar, a retired agriculture professor. "I spent my life as a university dairy farmer, so food is very important."

Within 30 minutes, all the food has been distributed and the parking lot has emptied out. The Kiwanis members begin packing up the van, discussing the following day's volunteer gig as they work. Same time, same place next week, the superheroes will return.



With inflation at a 40-year high, people are struggling to pay for basic necessities. This has led to more neighbors seeking food assistance to stretch their budgets. Currently, we are distributing enough food to provide upwards of 178,000 meals every day. / Photos by Caitlyn Barnett

From the CEO's Desk

As we embark on the second half of 2022, I'd like to call attention to part of Food Bank of the Rockies' strategic plan not often discussed: "shortening the line" — in other words, addressing root causes of food insecurity to reduce the number of people needing food assistance.

We're already engaging in this effort through public policy work, the distribution of vegetable seeds, and improving service to our 800+ Hunger Relief Partners so they can help shorten the line in their own communities. However, there's much more work to be done.

Food Bank of the Rockies seeks to build a shared understanding of the root causes of food insecurity and explore ideas for action at our organization with the eventual goal of reducing food insecurity in Colorado and Wyoming. To do this, we're studying root cause work taking place in Colorado, Wyoming, and across the nation. Why?

- Because we believe that access to sufficient nutritious food is a universal human right.
- Because we believe our role should be to not only serve people experiencing hunger, but also to leverage our resources to help create a future in which fewer people are forced to choose between eating and paying their bills.
- Because we envision a world in which no one depends on food banks or food pantries to feed themselves and their families.

Right now, the glow of summer is being overshadowed by national and global tragedies, soaring inflation, and the continued challenges to people's physical and mental health as we enter year three of COVID-19. Food Bank of the Rockies' work is more critically needed now than perhaps ever before.

We are currently spending more than \$1.3 million every month to purchase food to distribute to people experiencing hunger — triple what we were spending pre-COVID. As we weather these difficult times together, we are committed to showing up wherever we are needed most. That includes doing the work to address the root causes of hunger and to continue providing people with the nourishing food they need to thrive.

Thank you for your support in these important endeavors; we could not do any of this without you.



Gratefully,
Erin Pulling
President & CEO
Food Bank of the Rockies

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The Western Slope Etkin Family Distribution Center will be 84% larger than the current facility, enabling us to more effectively serve our Western Slope neighbors.

Western Slope Etkin Family Distribution Center Update

It's been over six months since we broke ground on the new Western Slope Etkin Family Distribution Center in Grand Junction. For an update, we checked in with Sue Ellen Rodwick, director of the Western Slope, Steve Kullberg, chief operations officer, and Tevin Thompson, construction project manager. Here are some of the things they are most looking forward to when it opens later this year.

"We are making rapid progress," said Kullberg. "The facility's expanded refrigerated space will allow us to continue to expand the amount of fresh produce, eggs, and milk products we supply for our 145+ partners across the Western Slope."

In fact, the new distribution center will provide 400% more refrigerated space, enabling Food Bank of the Rockies to source and store additional fruits and vegetables from local agricultural partners and distribute it to our Western Slope and mountain community neighbors experiencing hunger.

"Our team is looking forward to having adequate space to be more efficient in our work so that we can better serve our Hunger Relief Partners," said Rodwick.

The 84% larger distribution center will also allow Food Bank of the Rockies to partner with St. Mary's Medical Center Meals on Wheels Mesa County, who will use the commercial kitchen and storage space to increase the number of meals they deliver to older adults from 600 to 1,000 every day.

Summing up the overall purpose of the new distribution center, Thompson said, "This building is designed not just to meet the needs of today, but also to incorporate room for expansion in the future. It will help make the operations more efficient so that Food Bank of the Rockies can focus on its mission to serve the community and end food insecurity."

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larger facility

145+
Western Slope
Hunger Relief
Partners

August is Make-a-Will Month!

National Make-a-Will Month is the perfect time to make or update your estate plan! We would be honored to help you make a charitable plan that provides for the people and causes you care about. **For more on planned giving, contact Major and Planned Giving Manager Laurie Hagerman at lhagerman@foodbankrockies.org or visit foodbankrockies.org/give/give-funds/smart-ways-to-give.**

From Food Bank to Farm Feed

Neal Neumiller's chickens aren't picky about sell-by dates, but they draw the line at celery of any age. Strawberries or bananas that are past their prime? Great. But celery is a different story.

Neumiller lives in Casper, Wyoming, and partners with Food Bank of Wyoming (the Casper-based distribution center of Food Bank of the Rockies) to use expired produce as feed. It's a win-win, said Richard Plumlee, director of operations at Food Bank of Wyoming: Old produce stays out of the landfill and Neumiller's chickens happily fill up on their own private salad bar.

Plumlee explained that some of the produce the Food Bank receives is near the end of its shelf life. When it becomes unusable, he calls Neumiller, who collects it, separates the food from its packaging, then returns the non-food bits to be recycled.

Food security is important to Neumiller, and going forward he would like to see more people learn how to grow enough food for themselves and maybe some of their neighbors.

"I want to see the community that says, instead of having a manicured lawn, you need to provide for food security," he said. "We need to start helping produce for our community."



Produce unsuitable for distribution is sent to Neal Neumiller, whose chickens enjoy it as their private salad bar. / Photo provided by Neal Neumiller

FOOD BANK OF THE ROCKIES™

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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 nourishing communities in our newsletter.

We ignite the power of community to nourish people facing hunger.

