



Community members get fresh, culturally responsive food at New Freedom Park during a weekly food distribution. / Photo by Caitlyn Barnett

Fostering Community Through Food on East Colfax

The produce piled atop folding tables at New Freedom Park is almost as vibrant as the outfits and languages of the people gathered to collect it. Organized by Kaizen Food Share, a Hunger Relief Partner of Food Bank of the Rockies, this weekly food distribution focuses on providing culturally responsive foods to the majority refugee and immigrant population that inhabits this area in East Denver.

“We refer to it as a ‘no-cost bazaar,’ which seems to be the most effective way to explain to people what it is,” said Thai Nguyen, founder of Kaizen Food Share. She motions to the tables. “And it looks like a bazaar, doesn’t it?”

Kids chase a soccer ball around while individuals of all ages congregate to chat while waiting for the distribution to begin.

While the home countries of the people who make up this community are ever-changing — at least 22 countries were represented on this day — the need for nourishing, familiar foods is constant.

“The most challenging thing is how much anxiety people have with food,” said Mudah Di, site coordinator. “Everyone here has a food-scarcity mindset.”

To help alleviate some of that anxiety, the foods provided here are tailored to be as familiar to recipients as possible. Even with limits applied to the most popular items, enough is ordered so that everyone can leave with an amount suitable to cook meals that feel like home.

Hunger Relief Partners like Kaizen Food Share can order foods specifically for

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their clientele thanks to Food Bank of the Rockies’ Culturally Responsive Food Initiative (CRFI). This program prioritizes providing foods desired by the unique cultural groups we serve. This ensures our neighbors are getting the nourishment they need through the foods they know.

Just as people are flowing into and out of the areas we serve, so, too, do we continuously update our CRFI food lists to best meet the needs of our neighbors. Because just like nourishing people matters, so does making people feel comfortable.



Volunteers unload cantaloupes from Hirakata Farms provided by Food Bank of the Rockies to distribute to neighbors in need at a mobile pantry.
/ Photo by Scott Streble

From the CEO's Desk

When we talk about serving our neighbors, it's likely that a different image pops into each of our heads of who those neighbors are. Like everything in life, who we see as being a neighbor is impacted by who we are: where we live, who we spend time with, where we came from, our jobs and experiences and ambitions. But no matter who you picture when you hear the word "neighbor," food insecurity affects individuals just like them. From newly arrived individuals from Latin America, West Africa, East Asia, and Ukraine, to people who have called Colorado home their entire lives: these are all our neighbors, and Food Bank of the Rockies seeks to nourish them with familiar, nutritious food.

The past few years have challenged everything most of us know — or thought we knew — about food insecurity. After surviving the depths of COVID, last summer we faced the highest inflation rates in over 40 years. Organizationally, Food Bank of the Rockies is still spending roughly three-times more to purchase food every month than we were pre-pandemic. We are also seeing a 40-60% increase in demand for food services at our mobile pantries.

The causes of this sustained increase are complicated. Emergency SNAP allotments ended March 1, meaning a family of four now gets, on average, \$360 less each month to purchase food. School is out of session, so kids who rely on meals from school now need to find that nourishment elsewhere. Interest rates, food inflation, economic factors like poverty and unemployment: It all plays a role.

At the end of the day, it is only through the generosity of donors like you that we are able to do our work. From everyone at Food Bank of the Rockies: thank you. We hope you and yours are enjoying a wonderful summer.



Erin Pulling
President & CEO
Food Bank of the Rockies

Distribution Centers

Denver

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

Western Slope

698 Long Acre Drive
Grand Junction, CO 81505
970-464-1138

Wyoming

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

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opportunity provider.



A volunteer with Hunger Relief Partner Adams County Emergency Food Bank packs produce bags for her neighbors. / Photo by Scott Streble

The Difference Between Food Banks and Food Pantries

While the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, food banks and food pantries are very different operations that both play a pivotal role in addressing food insecurity.

Food banks are nonprofit organizations that operate large facilities that serve as food storage and distribution hubs. Their size allows them to receive, process, and distribute donations of any size from various sources. They also use their purchasing power to buy in bulk at low costs.

In addition to providing pantries with supplies, food banks also distribute food directly to neighbors. Food Bank of the Rockies does this through programs like Food for Kids, the Culturally Responsive Food Initiative, and Mobile Pantries.

Food pantries, or food shelves, are distribution centers that receive food and other goods and supply them to their communities. Food pantries vary widely in how they look and operate and are designed to meet the specific needs of their community.

Food Bank of the Rockies teams up with 800+ Hunger Relief Partners (food pantries) to nourish our neighbors in need. As part of our mission to assist food pantries with the critical work they do, we make it as easy as possible for our partners to access the supplies they need. One way we do this is by providing fresh produce, bread, and donated products at no cost.

Food banks and food pantries are critical partners in answering the challenge of hunger. When you make a gift to Food Bank of the Rockies, you can rest assured that we will maximize the value of your donated funds or time volunteering and use it to support our Hunger Relief Partners and the neighbors they serve.

Food Bank of the Rockies operates 244,479 square feet of distribution facilities in Denver, Grand Junction, and Wyoming. That's more than two-and-a-half football fields!

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 questions or more information about planned giving, contact Director of Annual and Planned Giving, Melannie Grimme, at mgrimme@foodbankrockies.org or visit foodbankrockies.org/give/give-funds/smart-ways-to-give.

4 Benefits of Volunteering

Research shows that there are numerous advantages of volunteerism. Whether you're volunteering with Food Bank of the Rockies or elsewhere, here are some of the benefits you can expect.

1. VOLUNTEERING IS GOOD FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Performing acts of kindness causes your brain to release mood-enhancing chemicals like dopamine and endorphins. Other benefits include stress relief and improved self-esteem.

2. VOLUNTEERING IS GOOD FOR YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH

In a 2017 study, 75% of participants said volunteering made them feel physically healthier. Another study found that adults who volunteered at least 200 hours a year were significantly less likely to develop heart disease and stroke.

3. VOLUNTEERING IS GOOD FOR YOUR CAREER

Corporate volunteerism can be a great way to bond as a team. Volunteerism also looks good on a resume: One study found that 76% of executives felt volunteering made a candidate more desirable.

4. VOLUNTEERING IS GOOD FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

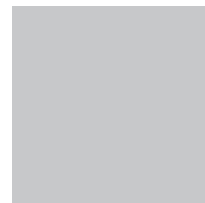
The final benefit of volunteering is also the simplest: It helps people in need. Regardless of which cause you devote your time to, your work will have a positive impact on your community.



Consider joining us as a volunteer today. Sign up at foodbankrockies.org/volunteer.



10700 E. 45th Ave.
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Mailing Address
City, State Zip



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.

