Looking Ahead to 2024 With Optimism and Determination

Just like so many people do at the start of a new year, Food Bank of the Rockies is also using this time to outline some 2024 “resolutions,” brainstorming ways to more effectively support our communities. Join us in looking ahead to the new year knowing that, together, we will be able to nourish our neighbors experiencing hunger.

Understanding Barriers to Food Access
Through a USDA grant, we will continue our efforts to map and understand service gaps and barriers to emergency food access in the counties we support. Examples of such obstacles include a lack of food distributions easily reached by public transportation and areas where affordable, nourishing food is hard to access.

Newly Arrived Neighbors Emergency Response
The Culturally Responsive Team will continue leading the Food Bank’s collaboration with partners and government agencies to respond to the arrival of people from the southern border through emergency-relief food bags and targeted food distributions. As of the time of printing, Food Bank of the Rockies had assembled and distributed more than 10,000 bags of food to newly arrived neighbors.

Healthcare Program
The Healthcare Program provides weekly, nutritionally tailored food boxes to people who have been diagnosed with certain medical conditions and screen positive for food insecurity. In 2024, we plan to increase the number of participants, add new healthcare partners, provide virtual education classes, and expand the amount of culturally diverse foods available.

Nutrition
Our Nutrition Team is implementing Healthy Eating Research guidelines to assess the nutritional quality of the food we distribute and identify strengths and opportunities to equitably distribute nutritious food in our communities.

Western Slope Growth
The expanded capabilities of our new Western Slope Etkin Family Distribution Center enabled us to add two new counties to our service area: Ouray and San Miguel. The larger facility also allows for a higher number of volunteers: In 2023, we logged 66% more volunteer hours than 2022, and we are on pace to keep increasing that volume!

We are able to provide these resources and much more to our neighbors thanks to supporters like you. With your backing, we are able to look forward to 2024 with hopeful anticipation, knowing that wherever there is a need, together we will find a way to meet it.
With the busy holiday season behind us and a new year before us, I’d like to take a moment to reflect on some of the things Food Bank of the Rockies and our Hunger Relief Partners accomplished in the last few months.

November and December are months when we gather together with loved ones, and food has so much meaning. It’s also a time when we at Food Bank of the Rockies pull out all the stops to not only meet the basic requirement for nourishment, but to provide our neighbors with items that are special to them. Familiar. Comforting. Maybe even foods that put smiles on their faces when they see it at a mobile pantry or on a Hunger Relief Partner’s shelves.

Part of doing that looks like sourcing turkeys for Thanksgiving months before November rolls around to ensure we’ll have enough to go around. Another aspect of that is asking our community members and partners what foods they want to see, then doing our best to get those items into the hands of the neighbors who requested them. Things like corn husks, masa flour, ground beef and pork, tomatillos, and dried ancho chiles for tamales, a traditional meal at Navidad celebrations. Or dried dates, oranges, apples, peanuts, cashews, banana leaves, rice, and ground pork for Lunar New Year feasts.

Those are all examples of food items our community has asked for and we’ve provided through our Culturally Responsive Food Initiative. In November and December alone, we distributed more than 145,800 pounds of culturally responsive foods — enough for nearly 118,000 nourishing, familiar meals.

What an honor to be part of an organization that asks and responds, innovates and listens. Thank you for joining us on our journey to truly nourish our communities with foods that fill plates and fuel joy. We are so grateful for your support.

Erin Pulling
President & CEO
Food Bank of the Rockies
The Benefits of Volunteering as a Family

Many families value volunteering as a way to teach children about the importance of community service and social justice, and help them become more connected to their communities.

By being asked to expend effort on helping others, kids learn valuable lessons about empathy that can help them grow into compassionate, caring adults. They also gain an earlier understanding of factors like socioeconomic status that can help broaden their worldview and allow them to communicate more easily with people from different backgrounds.

Not only that, but volunteering is also statistically associated with better mental and physical health in children and teenagers. Research published in JAMA Open Network showed that youth who participated in community service were 35% less likely to have behavioral or anxiety problems, 34% more likely to be in excellent or very good overall health, and 66% more likely to be “flourishing,” which the study defined as a holistic measure of well-being.

On the other end of the age spectrum, volunteering can also be beneficial for older adults. Bringing your older adult family members along for volunteering can be a great way to keep them active and invested in their communities. Older adults have a wealth of life experience and expertise that can provide learning opportunities for youth volunteers and create cross-generational connections.

Research has also shown that volunteering is good for older adults’ mental and physical health. A Carnegie Mellon University study found that older adults who volunteered on a regular basis were less likely to develop high blood pressure and experienced improved mood and self-esteem and lowered anxiety levels.

Whether you’re planning on volunteering with your children, your parents and grandparents, or all of the above, we deeply appreciate your gift of time. Thank you for making a difference, both in your own household and your community.


did you know that monthly support is one of the most powerful ways you can help nourish your neighbors? We’re currently looking for 50 generous supporters to join our monthly giving club, FEED365™. Your support will go even further as your first gift will be matched, up to $5,000, thanks to Mariann and David Catanuto, and an anonymous donor! Thank you for helping to answer the challenge of hunger.

Igniting Health and Hope Through Food

Paula worked full-time from age 18 to 65 at jobs ranging from tour director to administration positions in the medical and higher-education fields. Now, she receives the lowest SNAP benefits allowed – $23 a month – and relies on distributions like the Red Rocks Community Church Mobile Pantry to get the food she needs. She is in recovery from sepsis and shared that the nutritious food she gets from Food Bank of the Rockies is critical in her healing.

“I have to eat right, and I do love all the food they give us. Everything. I mean, there’s crackers, chicken, fruits, vegetables, beef,” Paula shared. “I even applied to be a proxy to bring more food back for other people; 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. So I’ve got a proxy to take home a little more. Which is good, because when I set out what I can’t use, it’s gone in 10 minutes. I just think the world of you all.”

Inspired by Paula’s story to support programs like mobile pantries?

Give today at foodbankrockies.org/give.
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.