



Fall 2019 • Meeting our community's basic needs since 1918.

# efaa news

## GET INVOLVED THIS HOLIDAY SEASON



Make a gift to EFAA on Colorado Gives Day (Tuesday, December 10th) and leverage the \$1 Million Incentive Fund to make your dollars go further to empower families to thrive.

**Pre-schedule your gift today at [www.coloradogives.org/EFAA](http://www.coloradogives.org/EFAA).**

### Food Pantry

Help provide all of the fixings for a special holiday meal! We need:

**Shelf-stable pie crusts**  
**Frozen turkeys**  
**Baking mixes**  
**Butter, eggs, & cheese**

Email [liz@efaa.org](mailto:liz@efaa.org) with questions about items or delivery.

### Gift Room

Give the gift of a new, unwrapped toy to children and teens in need. Gift ideas include:

**Legos**  
**Stuffed animals**  
**Sports equipment (skateboards, roller blades, scooters, etc.)**  
**Cosmetic & beauty supplies**

*Donations accepted from 12/2 through 12/13.*

**For more ways to get involved this holiday season, including volunteer opportunities, visit [www.efaa.org/holidaygiving](http://www.efaa.org/holidaygiving).**



## DAMAGE CAN'T DAMPEN RESOLVE FOR A BETTER LIFE

Inside Telma's home there isn't much furniture. In her living room there is a futon, a small television, and a kitchen table with three mismatched chairs — just enough for her family to share their meals together. This home, while modest, symbolizes a fresh start for Telma's family after a long journey to get here.

**Like many others, Telma first moved to Boulder to be close to family and provide a better future**

**for herself and her children. But when they arrived things weren't as she had hoped.** After finding the strength to leave her abusive husband she quickly fell behind financially. She was able to live with family, but the situation was unstable and she worried about how it would affect her two young children.

**That's when Telma was connected to EFAA. She was able to move into our housing, and for the first time in a long time, she had her own place to call home.**

But on July 12, just four short days after moving in, Telma and her family suffered another unforeseen setback. Their apartment, along with four other units and EFAA's food pantry, was flooded by a fire suppression sprinkler leak. As a result, they would have to evacuate the new home they worked so hard for.

**With thanks to EFAA's dedicated staff, volunteers and community partners who worked tirelessly to minimize the impact on our families, EFAA was able to place every single family, including Telma's, into an alternative EFAA housing unit that night.**

"The speed that EFAA responded to everything was amazing," said Telma. "At the beginning it was overwhelming. I thought, 'Where will we go next?'" Her apartment was one of the least affected units and only needed a few repairs before they were able to move back in. Now, she is finally able to work toward the future she's spent years dreaming of.

Looking forward, she is optimistic about her children getting a good education, especially her son who needs special support in the classroom. Telma herself is looking at taking classes to help her career, and hopes to give back by volunteering with EFAA one day.

**"If EFAA didn't step in, I would have either ended up homeless or had to return to my abusive husband. Now, I can sleep at night."**

# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



## EFAA'S MISSION

EFAA helps those in our community whose immediate needs for food, shelter and other basic necessities cannot adequately be met by other means, and supports their efforts toward financial stability or self-sufficiency.

### Emergency Family Assistance Association

Meeting our community's basic needs since 1918.

FALL 2019

This newsletter is published four times annually by Emergency Family Assistance Association  
1575 Yarmouth Avenue, Boulder, CO 80304-0564  
303.442.3042 • [www.efaa.org](http://www.efaa.org)

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## DOUBLE YOUR DONATION!

Ask your employer if they have a matching gift program and double the impact of your gift.

EFAA participants often face unexpected shocks that put their resilience to the test. Recently, here at EFAA we faced a shock of our own. **On July 12th, EFAA's main building in North Boulder sustained serious water damage from a fire sprinkler leak that inundated three apartments and rendered the food pantry uninhabitable. Our dedicated staff was able to find living arrangements for all displaced families, like Telma's, that very same night and swiftly relocated EFAA's food pantry operations to a temporary location — only missing one day of service.** The outpouring of support we received from donors, volunteers, community members and partner agencies is a testament to the strength of our community safety net.

For that and many things, we are grateful. **We are particularly grateful for what EFAA participants teach us every day about really having grit.** I will never forget in the midst of the sprinkler flooding, one of the families had a home business selling roses. As they saw their stock destroyed, they came outside with bouquets to hand out to the exhausted staff and helpers as thanks. It was a true reminder of the best things in us.

We are equally grateful that this year the EFAA Board of Directors has opened up the opportunity for these real experts to have a leadership role within our organization through the formation of a Participant Advisory Council (PAC). This includes a voting Board seat for a PAC member. I trust they will keep us focused on what is most important and impactful for our neighbors and I thank them for their time and engagement. EFAA is stronger with them having a seat at the table.

**We are indebted to a generous community of folks who step up in many ways to support EFAA with volunteer hours, financial contributions and effective partnerships.** Now as we gear up for our busiest time of year, we are asking for your continued support to help families this holiday season. **You can donate on Colorado Gives Day (mark your calendars: 12/10/2019!),** help us restock the food pantry, volunteer with us, give to our holiday gift room ... there are so many ways to help make the season brighter for all. Thank you for being part of our resilient and strong community!

Happy Holidays,

**Julie Van Domelen**  
*Executive Director*





# MEET EFAA'S ON-SITE MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELOR, NORA!



Through a partnership with Mental Health Partners, EFAA has a full-time bilingual therapist on-site to help participants navigate their mental health with up to 10 free sessions.

## AS EFAA'S ON-SITE COUNSELOR, WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

My role is to support participants through personally challenging

times. People come to EFAA for many different reasons, and sometimes those reasons are caused by events and feelings that are overwhelming and hard to manage.

## WHAT DO YOU TYPICALLY HEAR FROM THE PARTICIPANTS YOU MEET WITH?

People don't know this service [mental health counseling] exists, and when they find out they don't realize how flexible and focused on their own goals it can be.

## WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE BARRIERS TO ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES?

There's always a shortage of mental health services, especially for people who need it but cannot afford to go to a private practice that doesn't accept insurance. There's also a stigma about seeing a counselor— it can feel intimidating.

## WHAT DO YOU WISH MORE PEOPLE KNEW ABOUT WHEN IT COMES TO MENTAL HEALTH?

I think sometimes people are worried they will be judged for needing and asking for help. It takes a lot of strength and trust to share your story. You should feel safe and comfortable to talk about what you want to talk about and set your own goals. I'm here to focus on what participants want to focus on and to come up with solutions for the future.



EFAA's holiday gift room helped 316 families last year; Backflip Studios/Hasbro, Inc. donated over 1,000 toys.



# SPREADING HOLIDAY CHEER THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

Beth has been volunteering with EFAA for four years and goes above and beyond by working two shifts each week — one in the food pantry and one doing participant intake. But each winter, Beth transforms into something even more special: Chief Cheer Officer in the Holiday Gift Room!

While that may not be her “official” title, Beth knows a lot about spreading joy. **She oversees EFAA's Holiday Gift Room, which helps provide new, age-appropriate presents for families in need. Beth comes in every day the gift room is open to help families register and answer their questions. It's not unusual to see a line out the door.**

“Participants will recognize me from the gift room when they see me in the food pantry or at intake,” says Beth. She says people are really thankful to be able to get new presents for their children that they otherwise would be unable to afford.

**“It was very much helpful because I couldn't afford new toys for my kids, especially around the holidays,”** said a participant who has utilized EFAA's gift room in the past. “It has helped to make sure my kids don't feel deprived during Christmas, and it was nice to see my kids so happy.”

EFAA's holiday gift room will be open to accept donations from December 2nd through December 13th. **Visit our website for more details!** [www.efaa.org/holidaygiving](http://www.efaa.org/holidaygiving)



## PAC'S MISSION

To empower the EFAA community through the development of transformative participant-driven initiatives, partnerships, and involvement.

## MEET EFAA'S PARTICIPANT ADVISORY COUNCIL

It's been one year since EFAA's Participant Advisory Council (PAC) has been introduced as a catalyst for positive change on EFAA's programs and services. The group of seven participants, representing a variety of backgrounds and family forms, has been meeting every three weeks since last October to focus on ways to strengthen the EFAA community. EFAA supplies dinner, free childcare and help with transportation to each meeting to help eliminate barriers to participating on the PAC.

The PAC prides themselves on working collaboratively and efficiently and supporting one another both inside and outside of their meetings — the embodiment of neighbors helping neighbors.

### IN THIS LAST YEAR ALONE, THE PAC HAS ...

- Interviewed over 150 community members to identify unmet needs
- Advocated for and expanded the roles in which participants can volunteer with EFAA
- Provided valuable input to restructure EFAA's financial assistance for participants, including expanded funding for minor car repairs
- Represented EFAA at events and shared their experiences and knowledge of community issues in the media
- Informed EFAA's new strategic plan through an hour long focus group

Most exciting of all, the PAC now has a literal seat at the table as a voting member of EFAA's Board of Directors. The seat is shared by three different PAC members throughout the year who will serve 3-4 month terms each.

**"[PAC] is making EFAA a stronger and more responsive organization, and I think that the changes that have already been implemented have just been the beginning for the changes to come,"** said Lenora, who has served on the PAC since its inception. There is still a lot the PAC wants to accomplish in order to help people in our community who may be struggling to make ends meet. But they can't do it alone.

**"We're going to need a bigger boat,"** says Lenora. **"As EFAA expands from emergency services to empowering people to change their circumstances, [EFAA is] going to need access to resources. I want people to know how important community support is. That's how we'll be able to do this — through volunteer support, financial support, and the support of donated goods."**