



Spring 2021 • Meeting our community's basic needs since 1918.

efaa news



FIRES IN THE MIDST OF THE PANDEMIC: *A Network of Support*

When the CalWood and Left Hand Canyon fires broke out in Boulder County's mountain communities this fall, Chelce and her family of seven were living at a disbursed campsite in Nederland. After months of surviving in the wilderness, the woods had become their second home. One night in October, they received a phone call alerting them of a quickly spreading fire — and learned they would have to evacuate immediately.

Chelce's family came to Colorado in August after her sister-in-law died suddenly from a heart attack. She had been the glue that held Chelce and her brother's families together. The loss that they experienced was devastating. Together with her husband and brother, they decided the only way to move forward was to start over. For months, they prepared for the move from Oklahoma to Colorado. Finally, one day, three adults and four children squeezed into a car packed with all of their belongings and set out to build a better life.

Not long after they got to Colorado, their car broke down, causing them to spend what little they had on a rental. To save money, Chelce searched for free camping sites where her family would learn to survive on their own. "Moving to Colorado was like moving to a new planet," Chelce remarked. "I had never seen snowcapped mountains before ... actually, I don't think I ever even saw a mountain before." Yet before long, Chelce had the outdoor survival skills that would rival any nature guide. The experience

taught her and her children, aged 5 and 11, that they can overcome anything that life throws at them.

It was well past dark when Chelce received the evacuation call from Claudia, the Homeless Outreach Coordinator of the Nederland Community Presbyterian Church. Weeks earlier, when the group had run out of supplies, Chelce formed a connection with Claudia. She had helped Chelce's family access food and necessities and introduced her to other community resources, including EFAA. When Claudia arrived at their campsite to help them evacuate, they left everything but the clothes on their backs and headed for a hotel in Black Hawk. For the first time in months, they would have a roof over their heads.

During the fires, EFAA's Mountain Resource Liaison, Kristi, worked with other community partners to assist those who had been evacuated or lost their homes. Kristi quickly learned of Chelce's family and began coordinating closely with Nederland Community Presbyterian Church, the Nederland Food Pantry, and Boulder County Human Services to help get Chelce's family housed. "That's when the magic really started," said Chelce.

This network of human service groups provided Chelce's family with just over two weeks of hotel vouchers as they waited for a short-term housing unit with EFAA. The day they moved into their two-bedroom apartment, Chelce

Continued on page 3

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



When COVID-19 arrived last March, we had no idea what lay ahead. As the pandemic's impacts deepened over the next 12 months, EFAA played a critical role in our community's response to the crisis. This required ingenuity and flexibility from our dedicated staff and careful coordination with our local partners to stand up a smooth, effective response across Boulder County.

The numbers speak for themselves. Since March, EFAA has distributed over \$2.2M in COVID-19 financial assistance, including \$2M in rental assistance to keep people housed. Our case managers have scheduled over 3,000 appointments for critical needs assistance and referrals, our food bank has received over 12,000 visits, and we provided housing to 108 families with 219 children experiencing homelessness.

One positive lesson from this wrenching experience is that we live in a community that truly cares for each other and springs into action during a time of need. As donors and volunteers, you have made EFAA's emergency COVID-19 response possible. We are deeply grateful.

Looking ahead, EFAA anticipates continuing our emergency response into summer when widespread vaccinations will allow our economy to more fully reopen. For some, the end of the emergency will mean a welcome return to hugging grandkids and resuming work at the office with colleagues. For many EFAA participants, COVID-19's hardships will not be over; they will face a mountain of debt and housing arrears, children falling behind in school, workplaces permanently shuttered, and long-term health and emotional issues.

EFAA's upcoming COVID-19 recovery plan will prioritize three areas: children's outcomes, housing stability, and employment. Because families with young children face the greatest challenges, EFAA will increase financial support for early child development and child care needs. We expect to continue higher levels of rental assistance for at least the next year as households recover, and we will provide job retraining opportunities to help people reenter the workforce.

On behalf of neighbors severely impacted by the pandemic, EFAA thanks you for your continued concern and support as we complete our emergency COVID-19 response this spring and prepare to enter the long process of recovery and rebuilding.

Julie Van Domelen
Executive Director



EFAA'S MISSION

EFAA provides stabilizing services, innovative programs, and transformative advocacy to strengthen families and create a thriving community.

Emergency Family Assistance Association

Meeting our community's basic needs since 1918.

SPRING 2021

This newsletter is published three times annually by Emergency Family Assistance Association
1575 Yarmouth Avenue, Boulder, CO 80304-0564
303.442.3042 • www.efaa.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

Kristin Moseley, *President*
Joshua Sroge, *President-Elect*
Aaron R. Spear, *Secretary*
Lynn Shook, *Past President*
Garrett Marsilio, *Treasurer*

MEMBERS

Chris Ray
Leslie Durgin
Jahnvi Brenner
Jerry Comer
Karin Stayton
Karyn Kagiya
Keely Cormier
Kevin Luff
Martine M. Elianor
Nathalie Smith
Shauna Schmitz
Susi Gritton

ROTATING MEMBERS

Jody L
Lenora Cooper

DOUBLE YOUR DONATION!

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



MEET *Walter*



After 19 years, EFAA bade Food Bank Manager Liz Rowland farewell for retirement. EFAA is excited to welcome Walter O'Toole, who brings years of experience working to end hunger through food pantries like ours!

Q. What distinguishes EFAA from other food pantries you've worked with?

A. EFAA is very participant-oriented, offering a lot of food choices throughout the pandemic. It's also evident the strength of EFAA's volunteer program — I can really rely on them. I also think EFAA's holistic approach to helping people experiencing hunger is impressive. The root of hunger is poverty. EFAA offers resources, referrals, and housing in addition to food.

Q. What are you most excited about at EFAA?

A. I'm excited to dig into participants' tastes so that we can better cater to the needs and preferences of the community. I want EFAA's stock to be reflective of the kinds of foods our community wants.

Q. What is one thing you hope to improve?

A. I'm looking forward to expanding our new home delivery service. This is something that arose very quickly to meet the needs of the moment [pandemic], but a lot of our participants have transportation barriers that aren't going to go away.

Q. Tell us something about yourself that people may not know about you.

A. I play in a metal band with another staff member at EFAA.

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!

In recognition of National Volunteer Week, EFAA celebrates our volunteers! Last March, the pandemic shuttered our in-person volunteer program, but that didn't stop hundreds of you from getting involved remotely and jumping back into action when we welcomed back food bank volunteers in September. We couldn't do it without you!



342 VOLUNTEERS have helped us keep our doors open and our organization operating through the pandemic, contributing **7,547 HOURS** of service to our community



14 VOLUNTEERS have supported EFAA's children's program via zoom Kid's Club and distributing activity bags



11 VOLUNTEERS have made over **700** home food deliveries

Continued from cover

FIRES IN THE MIDST OF THE PANDEMIC: A NETWORK OF SUPPORT

cried tears of relief. "Having a kitchen, a bathtub, a shower ... you don't know how good you have it until it's gone," she said. "Just having a faucet with running water was life-changing. It made me a more humble person."

Once they were settled in EFAA's housing, Chelce began working closely with an EFAA case manager to secure longer-term affordable housing. She applied for the Housing Stabilization Program, a contract program through Boulder County that provides extended rental assistance and ongoing case management through EFAA. "We were so grateful to have the apartment at EFAA, but we knew the space was needed for someone else," said Chelce.

Chelce was approved for the program and shortly thereafter found a five-bedroom house that could accommodate her

large family. "My kids are the happiest they have been in a long time," she said. A little over a week after moving into her new home, she was offered a job with a bank. She hopes to continue moving forward with her life, maybe one day going back to school to continue her education. After everything she has been through, she knows there is nothing she can't accomplish once she puts her mind to it. "I want everyone to know that when you put in the effort, anything is possible," said Chelce. "I didn't always believe that, but now I know it's true. My family's story is the perfect example of that."

Chelce extends a special thank you to Becky and Derek of Ned's Restaurant, and Claudia and Bridgette of Nederland Community Presbyterian Church for their support of her family.

REMEMBERING TERRY BENJAMIN: *A Life Well-Lived*

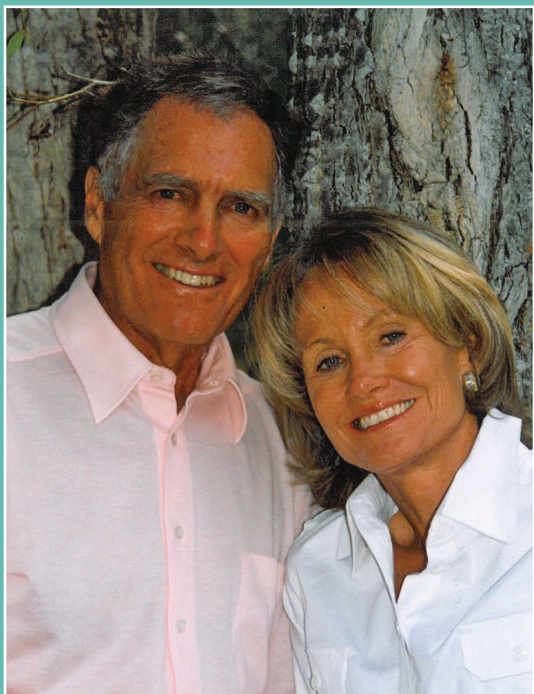
Two months after Terry Benjamin's passing on January 21, EFAA still remembers our longtime leader. Described by a friend as a "genuine, gentle giant of a person," Terry lived his 73 years with an outsized passion for helping those in need, combined with an underlying humor and kindness that touched everyone he met.

Terry not only guided EFAA's growth as Executive Director for 33 years, but also helped launch two other local safety-net organizations: Community Food Share, which began in a tiny closet at EFAA, and OUR Center in Longmont, where Terry simultaneously served as Executive Director for 12 years.

Terry came to EFAA in 1980 and helped grow our Housing Program. He acquired multiple housing sites across Boulder County, providing stability for hundreds of families experiencing homelessness and giving them the opportunity to get back on their feet. Upon retiring in 2013, Terry received numerous awards, including days named for him by both the City and Boulder County. EFAA gratefully bears Terry's legacy of passionate service to our community; his vibrant spirit is embedded in our work.



A CATALYST FOR *Recovery*



In 1991, former EFAA Board Member, Trent Cole and his daughter, Bonnie, produced a short film about the Boulder community to help raise money for EFAA. Fast forward three decades later to 2021 and the community need has never been higher.

In the face of unprecedented need, Kathy Cole, in honor of her late husband Trent Cole, generously put forward a \$100,000 match challenge to kick off EFAA's Spring Recovery Campaign — March 1st-April 30th. EFAA has unlocked the match and has already raised \$200,000!

But our work is far from over. The financial strain felt by low-income families is worsening for many in our community. Those who lost their jobs have seen their savings wiped out and debts soar. Recovery could take years.

Please consider making your gift before April 30th to support EFAA's Spring Recovery Campaign. Thank you for serving as a catalyst of recovery for our neighbors working hard to get back on their feet.

TO READ TRENT'S FULL STORY AND TO SEE THE FILM, VISIT EFAA'S WEBSITE AT WWW.EFAA.ORG/BLOG.