



# efaaneWS

## A VOICE FOR TRUTH, POWER, AND CHANGE: *Ambrosia's Story*



Ambrosia Berg (below) and her son, Azya.

Years ago, EFAA helped provide Ambrosia Berg with a security deposit to embark upon her new chapter as a mother. In March 2021, she met Senator Bennet as a representative of EFAA's Participant Advisory Committee (PAC) and told him about her experience raising her son on limited income. He was so impressed by Ambrosia that a few weeks later, he invited her as his special guest to President Biden's virtual Joint Address to Congress on April 28.

Twelve years ago, Ambrosia was a hardworking high school senior, on pace to graduate in the top ten of her class and excel in college. As she headed to University of Colorado the summer before starting her freshman year, she received the surprise of her lifetime — she was pregnant with her son.

That did not stop Ambrosia from chasing her dreams. By tapping into her own strength and determination, she completed her undergraduate degree in Speech, Language & Hearing Sciences and earned a certificate in LGBT Studies in eight years — all while working and raising her son. Today, Ambrosia is actively involved in shaping EFAA's policies and programs through the PAC, and she is busy preparing her son for middle school.

The power of Ambrosia's story is sending a ripple through our community, state, and nation. **Before the President's televised speech, Senator Bennet interviewed Ambrosia to discuss her experiences as a single mother and hear her thoughts on the Child Tax Credit bill that he helped sponsor.**

"I felt honored, heard, and appreciated to be his guest. It's a testament to my own strength and what I've pushed myself through within my life: from growing up in poverty experiencing violence, food insecurity, and housing instability, to being a single parent living in poverty while providing a safe, steady environment for my son. The reality is that I *have* gotten ahead in a 'just getting by world'. If not for resources like EFAA and other programs in Boulder, I wouldn't be where I am today."

Ambrosia's family, along with many others across our community and country, will benefit from the one-year extension of the Child Tax Credit (CTC) under the American Rescue Plan. The expanded CTC is projected to cut child poverty in America by nearly half in one year. It will lift 57,000 kids in Colorado out of poverty and benefit over 1 million kids statewide, including nearly 350,000 kids who had been left out of the full CTC prior to the American Rescue Plan.

Advocates are now urging the Biden Administration to take the next step and make the CTC permanent. This continued support

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# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



We are really feeling the emergence from COVID-19 at EFAA! After more than a year of mainly remote work, with the exception of our food bank, our staff is increasingly back on site, and we are currently planning logistics around return to in-person participant services.

Through the pandemic, we were able to pivot quickly and rise to many challenges. Some of the changes improved processes that we will keep, including home food delivery for homebound seniors and people with disabilities and offering the option of phone-based case management appointments.

While life beyond the pandemic slowly returns, EFAA continues to see a high level of need in the community. We are still managing more than twice the pre-COVID level of emergency rental assistance. Households are coping with drained savings, increased debt, and high levels of stress, loss, and depletion. Overall inequality in our community has worsened through COVID, with people of color and lower-income households enduring the worst health and economic outcomes.

As we transition out of the emergency stage, EFAA is focusing on a healthy recovery for all. Efforts in literacy and children's programming, including access to camps this summer, will help kids recover their learning and socializing skills. EFAA is also preparing new programming to help families with young children chart a long-term path out of poverty, as well as an emphasis on economic resilience to help families with employment, financial literacy, and debt and credit management.

Additionally, EFAA is increasingly using its voice and amplifying the voices of participants to improve the broader conditions in our community as we emerge from this pandemic. In our cover story, Ambrosia shares her experience as Senator Michael Bennet's invitee to the recent virtual presidential joint address to Congress, where she spoke on the positive impacts the Federal Child Tax Credit (CTC) will have on her ability to raise her son as a single mom.

All that EFAA does would not be possible without you – your financial support, your time spent volunteering, and your voices in the community as ambassadors. From all of us at EFAA, I extend our heartfelt gratitude for your enduring support and encouragement.

**Julie Van Domelen**  
Executive Director

*Mark your calendars*

Our Annual Celebration  
Gala is postponed to  
April 9, 2022.  
*We'll see you then!*



## 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.

#### SUMMER 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](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.



# Dedicated TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

At EFAA, we know that access to opportunity is key to success, and not everyone in our community has historically had the same access. That's why, as an organization, we uplift and celebrate diversity, build pathways to inclusion, and work toward a community where identity is not a predictor of success.

To bring our mission, vision, and values to life, EFAA is taking action to integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into every level of our organization. These actions include:

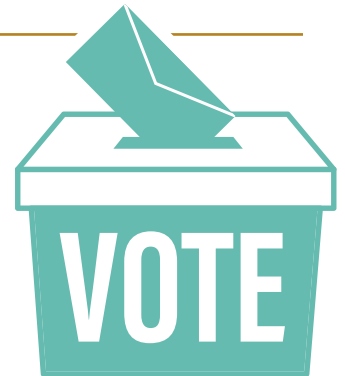
- **Shifting power to those most impacted by economic inequality.** Our Participant Advisory Committee (PAC) informs EFAA's service delivery, program design, and advocacy efforts. PAC has two seats on our Board of Directors and participants can volunteer directly in our programs. Participants are no longer passive recipients of aid but are active and equal contributors.
- **Commitment to DEI on a structural level.** Staff have formed an active DEI Task Force that helps prioritize DEI efforts at the staff level — increasing training and promoting safe spaces for difficult conversations. In 2020, the Board established a DEI Committee focused on providing guidance and oversight of EFAA's DEI efforts. We are currently finalizing an org-wide DEI plan to guide our work.
- **Ensuring that our services represent the diverse populations we serve.** For example, we strive to offer culturally relevant choices in the food bank, and we require all EFAA case managers to be fluent in Spanish. We are also revitalizing our recruitment practices to ensure our staff, board/committee, and volunteers represent the diversity of our community.

EFAA is deeply committed to continuing to invest resources to transform our organization and community at large and we look forward to continuing to share our journey with you.

## EFAA SUPPORTS BEDROOMS ARE FOR PEOPLE

*EFAA supports creative housing solutions for families experiencing homelessness.*

Family homelessness is a critical, yet often invisible issue in our community. Almost 1,000 school-aged children in Boulder County experience homelessness each year.



When families lose their homes, the most common solution is to “double up” with another family in a home; 54% of registered homeless children in the United States are living in this kind of housing arrangement. **In Boulder's high-cost housing environment, where the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment is \$2,100, the ability to double up with another family is critical to preventing local family homelessness.**

However, in most of Boulder, it is currently illegal for more than three unrelated people to live together. These occupancy limits defy the occupancy standards recommended in the Fair Housing Act, and disproportionately affect low-income families at risk of homelessness, including those we serve at EFAA.

**Because of how the city's occupancy limits put children and families at risk of further homelessness, EFAA is endorsing the November 2021 ballot measure set forth by Bedrooms Are For People.** We encourage you to learn more about this issue by visiting [www.bedroomsareforpeople.com](http://www.bedroomsareforpeople.com).

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would give families like Ambrosia's more money each month to cover bills, buy groceries, make sure children have appropriate school supplies, and help meet critical basic needs to make it through the pandemic.

“When I was getting my college degree while raising my son, everyone told me that I was going to use my voice to do great things in the world. **Today, I see that I have become that voice of truth, power, and change.** Being part of my communities, including the queer community and deaf

community, I have heard so many stories and experiences that I carry with me. I understand the world in a different way that I want to share with everyone.”

*This story is part of EFAA's Strategic Education efforts, seeking to raise awareness of issues, such as the CTC expansion, impacting the most vulnerable people in our community so that we may work collaboratively to create local solutions.*

# THE NEXT GENERATION OF *Readers*

Early childhood literacy is an essential aspect of children’s development that sets the foundation for success and well-being later in life. Yet, for many families experiencing poverty, books are a luxury outweighed by more pressing basic needs like food and shelter. With more than half of families in poverty unable to access children’s books, this barrier to literacy deepens the cycle of poverty.

**To address this disparity, EFAA is mobilizing resources for families to get kids excited about reading through our Literacy Enhancement Program.** Since 2017, thanks to dedicated partners like Zonta Foothills Club and Bright By Three, every one of our 56 housing units for families with children experiencing homelessness has a fully stocked bookshelf, filled with age- and home-language appropriate reading material which is theirs to keep.

Our efforts were bolstered this year by a group of dedicated volunteers who helped us reach out to the community to restock our bookshelves, organize and distribute “comfort bags” for kids (filled with books, a comforter, and a stuffed animal), and curate reading material for parents and kids alike. A few of these volunteers included an assistant principal, a teacher, and a librarian — expanding their love of literature to touch our whole community.

Learn more about EFAA’s programs to strengthen children, youth, and families by following us on social media.

EFAABoulder 
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## HOST A FOOD DRIVE FOR EFAA

**Food donations often slow down in the summer months, just as need rises with kids out of school.**

### *You can help.*

Host a food drive for EFAA! There are thousands of people in Boulder who simply don’t have enough food to eat each day. Organize a food drive with your school, faith community, workplace, or neighborhood. You can make a big difference in your community in just a few easy steps!

Visit [www.efaa.org/food-drive](http://www.efaa.org/food-drive), or email [foodbank@efaa.org](mailto:foodbank@efaa.org) to learn more.



## What Your Support MADE POSSIBLE SINCE MARCH 2020

There’s no doubt that the past year was an extremely challenging one. One silver lining? We live in a community that springs to action to help our neighbors in need.



**\$3.5 MILLION**  
in direct financial assistance for rent, food, utilities, and more



**OVER 1 MILLION**  
pounds of food



**3,861**  
appointments with EFAA’s case managers to link families to services and opportunities