



WHEN LIFE HIT HARD, HE FOUND HOPE: *Robert's story*

Robert, a retired UPS driver and small business owner, moved 20 years ago from Kentucky to Colorado to be near his son. Things were going well for Robert, until his wireless internet business was hit hard during the 2008 recession. In the blink of an eye, he lost his business, his home, his ability to make ends meet.

That's when a friend told him about EFAA. EFAA was able to help immediately with financial assistance for his car payment, fresh groceries from EFAA's food bank, a warm referral to Boulder Housing Partners for housing, and even a bed to sleep on.

As the economy began to slowly rebound and Robert was able to earn money again, Robert found himself in a place that so many of our neighbors' experience: "I made a bit too much to qualify for food stamps, but not enough to get by day-to-day, let alone in a place as expensive as Boulder," said Robert. "EFAA was the only place I could turn to for help while being 'in-between'."

In the intervening years, Robert was able to get back on his feet and didn't need EFAA services for a long time. But then, as is often the case, life happened.

In November 2021, Robert woke up with a major toothache and an eye swollen shut. He went to Boulder Restorative Dentistry right away, and the infection was so severe that the oral surgeon wouldn't let Robert leave without pulling several teeth. Because of its proximity to the bloodstream and brain, a tooth infection of this nature could have killed him.

After the procedure, implants, and a healing dental appliance, Robert was shocked to find he was left with an astronomical 5-figure bill. His dental work was not covered by insurance, social security, or any government support. His son and daughter pitched in what they could to help, but he still came up short.

When tough times struck again, Robert was able to turn to EFAA. EFAA was able to help close the gap on his dental bill. "I've still got plenty of challenges, but the important thing is that now I have one less headache."

Today, Robert is embarking on a new chapter he long feared — transitioning his wife into a nursing home. While living in Kentucky, she suffered a major car



accident that left her with a traumatic brain injury and a stroke. A third of Robert's income goes to provide the extensive care she needs.

Robert's story reminds us that everyone has a plan, and then life happens. Whether it's through one-time support — or intermittent support throughout the years — EFAA helps our neighbors navigate life's inevitable highs and lows.

"The reality is I'm probably going to have to reach out to EFAA every now and then to ask for help. It's a tough deal. You don't expect these kinds of things when you're 40, 50, or even 60. But when you're 70, you just can't produce like you can when you were younger. At first, I felt intimidated coming to EFAA, and maybe even a little proud. But I realized that's the way life is sometimes, and asking for help is nothing to be ashamed of."

FROM THE 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 2022

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DOUBLE YOUR DONATION!

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

I write this letter several weeks after the devastating Marshall wildfire. Such a large natural disaster on top of the Omicron COVID virus surge makes for a grim start to 2022. This is not where most of us thought we would be this time last year.

But our community and neighbors have been through many disasters before. This has created a muscle memory within local governments and safety net organizations of how to mobilize, coordinate, and respond quickly. While most of the wildfire affected homes are in East County, EFAA has been busy supporting families affected by wind damage in the City of Boulder and liaising with agencies like Sister Carmen Community Center in Lafayette to support them in triaging housing and other human service needs for the displaced.

We as a community are resilient, able to bounce back from difficult life events. This is a resilience built through the exhausting work of coming together to address community need during crises, and at the household level, charting a path to recovering from these shocks that disrupt life, increase stress, and deplete assets. Resilience is hard-earned.

Whether it's a household or a community, the level of wellbeing is largely determined by a combination of where you start and what happens along the way. Having assets helps weather shocks. So do strong social connections, effective local organizations, and strong personal skills of resilience.

EFAA's participants display such resilience on a daily basis. They are experts in making ends meet, accessing supports, building their networks, and navigating the challenges of having fewer financial resources in an expensive community.

EFAA stands committed to helping in this journey: whether it is a fire or flood, a medical shock, the loss of a job, or the myriad other ways people face adversity.

What Confucius wrote well over two thousand years ago holds true today: "Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall".

Julie Van Domelen
Executive Director

In response to community concerns about COVID and the Marshall Fire, EFAA has made the difficult decision to cancel our annual celebration gala. Stay tuned for ways in which you can continue to support EFAA.



Giving Back COMES IN MANY PACKAGES



Over the holidays, a group of nine differently-abled adults made a difference in our community by hosting a food drive for EFAA. Together, they raised over 960 meals for local families!

After first volunteering in EFAA's Food Bank, clients of Colorado Recovery — a Boulder-based residential treatment facility for adults with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and other serious mental illnesses — were confronted with the reality that not everyone in our community has enough to eat. This experience inspired them to take action.

These individuals overcame significant personal challenges to help others. When they first set up their food drive out front of Safeway Arapahoe, it was hard for many of them to put themselves out there to engage with customers — especially those with anxiety disorders. But once the donations started coming in, they became really motivated and started opening up.

"Seeing our clients in this special situation made all of the hard work worth every moment," says Dalma, Colorado Recovery's Rehabilitation Counselor. "When they packed up the car with all of the bags of groceries, they felt a sense of pride and ownership for their efforts to give back to the community."

Gathering food for local families experiencing hunger, *and* providing a meaningful volunteer experience for adults with different abilities? Talk about a win-win.



A Seat at the Table: EFAA'S PARTICIPANT ADVISORY COMMITTEE



At EFAA, we are committed to elevating the voices of our participants and incorporating their perspectives into our service delivery, program design, and advocacy efforts. It has been four years since EFAA's Participant Advisory Committee (PAC) was introduced as a catalyst to achieve this goal.

This dedicated, passionate group of nine individuals represents a variety of backgrounds, family forms, and lived experiences. They meet monthly to provide critical feedback to improve EFAA's programs and weigh in on EFAA's public policy positions to improve conditions affecting low-income families in Boulder County. EFAA provides a monthly stipend to PAC members to help address barriers to participation. The PAC also has two seats on EFAA's Board of Directors to provide a key perspective in the organization's decision-making.

EFAA is so grateful to the PAC for their service and is honored to work alongside them in improving our community. Thank you!

Are you an EFAA participant interested in making your voice heard? Please contact ana@efaa.org to learn more about joining the PAC.

We asked our PAC members ... what does being on the PAC mean to you?

“It's not only about giving someone a fish, or even teaching them how to fish, but it makes the sea accessible to all people so they can count on the resources for fishing. In other words, PAC is an important way to create the necessary structural change in our community together.”
—Adriana

“It's a great way to give back to my community, meet people with similar interests, and collaborate with others.”
—Monica

“Volunteering for the PAC means that collectively we have a way to help EFAA become an even better organization by bringing information DIRECTLY to staff and management from diverse participant members that previously was either unknown, unrecognized, or unheard.”
—Lenora



EFAA is excited to introduce Patty Carvajal, EFAA's first-ever Director of Operations. As EFAA has grown and expanded our services over the years, Patty will bring much needed support and coordination to keep EFAA delivering its very best to our community.

MEET Patty!



Q. What brought you to work for EFAA?

A. The Director of Operations position is very similar to my previous job at an organization focused on basic needs, resource advocacy, and homelessness. I feel very lucky to be here and am excited to continue in this vein.

Q. What will the Director of Operations position aim to achieve?

A. Streamlining, establishing processes, and taking things off other people's plates that should "live" in an operational position. I like to wear a lot of different hats, and this position affords me that easily. Between IT, facilities management, centralizing purchases, managing contracts, and in-kind, there will never be a dull moment!

Q. What excites you most about this new position?

A. The fact that it's a new position at a grassroots organization, and I can play a role in helping EFAA grow. I'm also excited to lead such a great team. I love to problem-solve, get my hands dirty, and help others.

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

A. My wife and I made a conscious decision early on to adopt older kids — our daughter is now 22. We're thinking about fostering older kids again in the next year or so. We also have 4 dogs and 3 cats!

Father-Son VOLUNTEER DUO CELEBRATES 10 YEARS AT EFAA

We would like to celebrate Matt and his father, Rory, for volunteering in EFAA's Food Bank for a decade!

Matt began his volunteer journey at EFAA as a high school student. Matt continued volunteering after he graduated, and soon thereafter his dad began tagging along. Today, the two are an important presence in the food bank. "There really is something special about this place," says Rory, "It's such a welcoming community that keeps us coming back."

Thank you to Rory, Matt, and all of our amazing volunteers!

