



## SHE REFUSED TO BE DEFEATED: *Sarah's Story*



As a young HR professional enjoying life in Colorado with her husband and dog, you wouldn't know that Sarah has struggled with homelessness over the past five years.

As soon as Sarah and her husband would secure housing, something would fall apart. Unforeseen expenses would come up, such as emergency car repairs or needing to travel for Sarah's mother-in-law's funeral, leaving them short on rent. Another time, living with friends, they found themselves in an unsafe situation and needed to leave suddenly. With rent prices in Boulder County being at an all-time high, it felt nearly impossible to find safe, stable housing within their budget.

Finally, Sarah found a job that paid her well enough to make ends meet. When COVID hit, her company laid off hundreds of staff. As part of the HR team, she worked long and hard hours processing the unemployment applications. Initially affected by a company-wide pay cut, she was able to keep her job, but eventually, the company outsourced their HR work and laid off the entire HR staff, including Sarah.

Back in a situation with insufficient income to afford housing, Sarah and her husband started living out of a hotel in Lyons month-to-month while they looked for alternatives. They were only able to afford this during the winter months. When summer came, they lived out of a borrowed RV with no access to air conditioning or running water. Exhausted from experiencing one hurdle after another, they needed help.

Sarah got an appointment with a resource navigator at OUR Center, EFAA's sister organization in Longmont. She was then given a warm referral to Boulder Housing Partners to help her find an apartment. Once in Boulder, Sarah was referred to EFAA for help meeting their other basic needs.

Sarah began working with Crystal, one of EFAA's Basic Needs Resource Navigators, on budgeting, spending goals, and connections to other community resources to assist economically disadvantaged people. EFAA was able to help Sarah cover the cost for new eyeglasses — a necessity that had been on the back burner for so long as she struggled to afford more urgent needs like food. She also accessed SNAP (the federal food assistance program), a discount internet provider, and help with finding furniture.

"The level of stress in your life when you can't meet your basic needs completely consumes you. Only once it's



off, you realize that you're a human being that can live, breathe, and think. When you have been struggling for so long like I did, you wonder if you will ever feel human again. I am so thankful to EFAA for reminding me of my humanity."

**Over time, Sarah was able to save enough money for a security deposit and the first month's rent at an apartment of her own.** After years of housing instability, she and her husband finally had a place to call home again.

Today, Sarah continues to come to EFAA's food bank to stretch her budget for other critical needs. As someone allergic to gluten, she values EFAA for its many healthy, organic, and specialty offerings. She typically cannot afford to purchase these types of things from the grocery store, and EFAA's food bank helps her fill those gaps.

**"Coming to EFAA was absolutely world changing. It has been not only a catalyst for me and my husband to get back on our feet – but to jump into the healthiest chapter of our lives. I've spent years trying to just survive; I didn't remember what it could feel like to thrive."**

Without the stress of meeting their basic needs, Sarah can now focus on building health and wealth after years of experiencing intermittent homelessness. We at EFAA are happy that she reached out and wish her all the best.

# 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 2023

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)

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### OFFICERS

Keely Cormier, *President*  
Josh Sroge, *Past President*  
Shauna Schmitz, *Secretary*  
Garrett Marsilio, *Treasurer*  
Jerry Comer, *President-Elect*

### MEMBERS

Penny Bennett	Ema Lyman
Lisa Bowen	Scott Reardon
Jahnvi Brenner	Roberto Rivero
Christine Case	Nathalie Smith
Susi Gritton	Julee Stephensen
Jessica Klotsche	Monica Vargas
Kevin Luff	Carmela Weber

## DOUBLE YOUR DONATION!

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

As the alarm bells of COVID grow quieter, there is a risk of folks thinking the crisis has passed. The economic shocks of COVID were buffered with Federal and State support to businesses and households. The economic effects of inflation are more insidious in that it slowly deteriorates people's ability to afford their basic needs. Most of the people we serve are still dealing with lower savings, higher debt, and generally increased economic insecurity coming out of COVID. Wages generally have not kept up with inflation, intensifying the challenge of making ends meet. Inflation hits part of our community particularly hard — seniors on fixed incomes and lower-income households are the least able to absorb the increased costs of housing, childcare, food, and other essentials.

We see these effects every day. EFAA is responding to record numbers of households coming to our food bank, far higher than during the peak months of COVID. We expect this to increase as the Federal food support program (SNAP), which provided maximum benefits to all during the COVID health emergency, is scaling back benefits to be adjusted downward based on income. Repeal of the public health emergency will also mean millions of Americans will lose their Medicaid health insurance coverage, predicted to hit in April. Similarly, federal rental assistance of over \$17 million that came to Boulder County to supplement local resources and keep people from being evicted has now ended. Eviction rates in the County are rising at an alarming rate, family homelessness is increasing, and more and more people are seeking support from EFAA in anticipation of not being able to afford the next month's rent.

We continue to believe in EFAA's vision that together, we can build a community where everyone is stable, healthy, and thriving. As an organization that relies almost entirely on local donations, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to you for staying with us as we assist with what many households are now facing. **Our work is made possible by our wonderful community and your continuing support. Thank you!**

**Julie Van Domelen**  
Executive Director





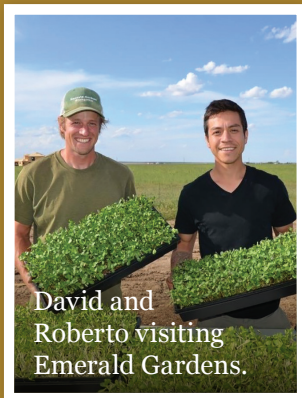
# Mushrooms AND MICROGREENS!

Sadly, high-quality produce isn't always a guarantee at food banks. Which is why EFAA is proud to partner with the East Denver Food Hub to provide local, nutritious food to our participants year-round.

Founded in 2020 by David Demerling and Roberto Meza, the East Denver Food Hub (EDFH) is developing a resilient and compassionate local food system that addresses food insecurity, supports local agriculture, and develops wealth-building opportunities for small farmers.

With funding made available through COVID relief bills, EFAA works with EDFH and their partner farms, Sugar Moon Mushrooms and Emerald Gardens, to purchase mushrooms and microgreens. This produce, grown year-round in greenhouses, is in high demand in our food bank — rarely staying on shelves longer than a couple days.

*"I received two 16-ounce containers of microgreens from EFAA. I am on a fixed income (disability) and LOVE it when there are healthy vegan options available for me to supplement my diet," said an EFAA participant. "I do not eat processed foods and am always overjoyed when I get lucky enough to get healthy & nutritious food."*



David and Roberto visiting Emerald Gardens.

## MEET Jasmin

**Q. What brought you to work for EFAA?**

**A.** When I saw the posting for the Family Housing Navigator Position, I was working at OUR Center, EFAA's sister organization in Longmont. I was compelled by the challenge of this new position, especially knowing how families were impacted by COVID and how COVID had impacted the housing market. I was excited to join another great organization.

**Q. Tell us about your role as Family Housing Navigator.**

**A.** I support families experiencing homelessness in securing stable housing or getting into a housing program that can benefit the whole family. I work with each family individually to identify resources, set goals, and make plans. I oversee EFAA's short-term housing priority list and work with partner agencies, hotels, and private landlords to help families navigate all their options.

**Q. What excites you most about this new position?**

**A.** I like that I get to support our community, especially those experiencing homelessness. Right now, we are seeing a lot of families doubling up or staying in their cars. I can see the stress that families are under when I first meet with them. However, in working regularly with the families, I get to see how the resources we provide, goals, and plans we make together can make such a difference. I get to be part of a lot of good outcomes by advocating for our EFAA families. My hope is to continue strengthening partnerships with property owners, partner agencies, and the community to best assist families during their search for housing or general resources.



In September, Jasmin M. joined EFAA as our first-ever Family Housing Navigator. This position was created to better support homeless families in their efforts to secure housing.

*Join us!*

On April 30<sup>th</sup> EFAA is hosting a community gathering at the Junkyard Social. Mingle with friends of EFAA and invite someone new who you think may be interested in supporting our work. **Tickets are available now at [www.efaa.org/donate/funds](http://www.efaa.org/donate/funds).**



## THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

In recognition of National Volunteer Week, we thank you for your kindness and compassion, your enthusiasm and devotion, and for the smiles you bring to many.

Together we are building a community where all our neighbors can meet their basic needs and springboard out of poverty!

**DONATE. VOLUNTEER. GET HELP**



Emergency  
Family  
Assistance  
Association

[www.efaa.org](http://www.efaa.org)

# BOULDER COUNTY COMMUNITY WELLBEING DASHBOARD 2022



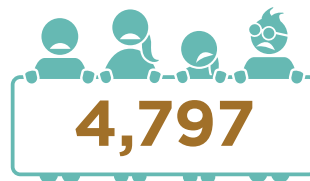
## ARE WE MOVING TOWARDS A COMMUNITY IN WHICH EVERYONE CAN THRIVE?

To answer that question, EFAA created a snapshot of Boulder County's poverty, income and wages, child well-being, food security, housing affordability, and other indicators.

### POVERTY



**1 IN 10 PEOPLE**  
(Over 30,000 People)  
in Boulder County  
live below the federal  
poverty line



**KIDS LIVE IN  
POVERTY**  
in Boulder County

### INCOME & WAGES

**\$12.56**



HOURLY **MINIMUM** WAGE  
BOULDER COUNTY

**\$38.14**



HOURLY **LIVING** WAGE  
BOULDER COUNTY

A household would need to have  
**3 FULL-TIME MINIMUM WAGE JOBS**  
to provide the basics of life.

AREA MEDIAN  
INCOME

**\$116,900**

Average annual EFAA  
household income is only  
**12%** of Boulder County Area  
Median Income (AMI)

AVERAGE  
HOUSEHOLD  
INCOME EFAA  
PARTICIPANTS

**\$13,593**



### ACCESSING FOOD

Food is more expensive in Boulder County:



**\$4.22**

BOULDER COUNTY

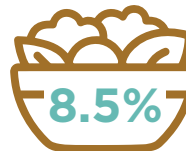
AVERAGE COST OF MEAL



**\$3.36**

COLORADO

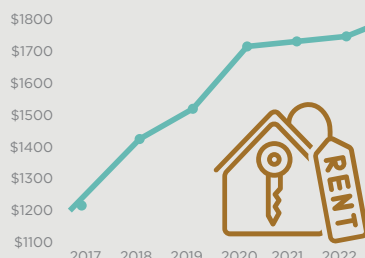
And it is getting worse due to  
inflation rates near a **40-YEAR  
HIGH** on top of the devastating  
effects of the Covid pandemic.



**8.5%**

of children in  
Boulder County  
**DON'T ALWAYS  
HAVE ENOUGH**  
nutritious food to meet  
their growing needs

### HOUSING STABILITY



**\$1,748**

average rent for  
a 2-bedroom in  
Boulder

**1,982**

**SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN  
EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS**

in Boulder and St. Vrain School Districts over the  
past year, almost **TRIPLE** the number of the previous  
school year, driven in part by the Marshall Fires



Our work is cut out for us, but together, we can address our  
community's most pressing issues. Thank you for your support!

Visit [www.efaa.org/about/why-it-matters/](http://www.efaa.org/about/why-it-matters/)  
for the full report.