



# efaaneews

## AFTER CHRONIC ILLNESS, ANASTASIA'S FUTURE LOOKS *Healthy and Bright*

**A**nastasia first came to EFAA in 2015. She was pregnant and suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. The pain and inflammation from her condition made it difficult to work. She and her husband were trying to make ends meet on just one income, but it wasn't enough to cover their rent and basic needs. EFAA provided financial assistance to help with expenses, and Anastasia made regular visits to the food bank to

“ Because of all the fresh produce in EFAA's food bank, I was able to heal myself.”

help stretch the budget. Unfortunately for Anastasia, the medications prescribed for her rheumatoid arthritis weren't providing relief, so she decided to explore alternative, holistic health solutions. As she began incorporating juicing and making changes to her diet, she noticed her pain and inflammation subsiding. “Because of all the fresh produce in EFAA's food bank, I was able to heal myself.” Amazed at the results, Anastasia continued her self-healing journey and worked towards certification as a holistic health consultant and detoxification specialist.

As her physical health continued to improve, her financial health was on a different track. During the pandemic, her



marriage ended. As a single mom with no support, she was working two jobs to cover expenses. She was exhausted and felt like her life was in crisis.

Then in the spring of 2022, a healthy, and pain-free Anastasia enrolled in the Financial Health Course (FHC), sponsored by EFAA. She started the course with a large debt and a deep fear of her finances. Now she is actively putting into practice the knowledge and skills she's learned, and has regained control of her financial situation. Through the resource contacts she made during the program, she was able to rent an apartment at an affordable rate and establish a payment plan to close out her credit card debt. “It all started from the Financial Health Course and believing. Jordan and Kingsley (FHC Instructors) always made me believe in myself and that I can do this.”

### What's next on the horizon?

Anastasia has been working with an organization that is mentoring her to realize her dream of establishing a non-profit organization offering holistic health services to individuals who typically don't have access to alternative wellness options, so that they too may be guided on their own self-healing journey.



## Happy 5th Anniversary to the EFAA PARTICIPANT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC)

In 2018, EFAA created the Participant Advisory Committee (PAC) to bring the perspectives and lived experiences of EFAA participants into our service delivery, program design, and advocacy efforts. PAC members have two voting seats on EFAA's Board of Directors. Thank you to our outgoing members for sharing your opinions and feedback to help improve EFAA's programs and better serve our community. Your contributions have helped make EFAA a stronger organization.



EFAA PAC members with EFAA Public Policy & Outreach Coordinator, Ana Fernandez Frank

# 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.

Summer 2023

This newsletter is published three times annually by Emergency Family Assistance Association  
1575 Yarmouth Avenue, Boulder, CO 80304-0564  
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## DOUBLE YOUR DONATION!

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

As our community returns to a new normal, the post-COVID period looks significantly different for many of our neighbors. Depletion from the economic crises of the pandemic, inflation, and the recent reduction in Federal supports for food, rental assistance and health care provided during COVID have combined to create one of the most difficult moments in recent memory for many households in Boulder.

As a result, we continue to see a dramatic increase in people coming to EFAA. Weekly food bank visits are twice the level pre-COVID. The rising costs of rent and utilities have increased housing insecurity, leading to pressures on EFAA for financial assistance to keep people housed and with the lights on. Even with this support, eviction rates have increased dramatically across Boulder County. The number of school children experiencing homelessness in the Boulder Valley School District has increased to over 800 from pre-COVID levels in the low 300s. EFAA is having to step in more frequently with emergency hotel stays to provide short-term shelter for families with children who have lost their housing. These strains on the local safety net are seen across agencies and across the county.

But as you will read in this newsletter, EFAA participants are finding paths through these challenges. The story of Anastasia provides a great example of this. EFAA's mission goes beyond providing stability through the safety net to helping households move out of poverty and economic insecurity over the longer-term. EFAA provides opportunities to learn skills like strategies for managing credit, developing savings habits, and building basic computer skills through classes provided at EFAA in collaboration with our partners. At our housing sites, resource navigators work with the parents to budget, save money, and identify employment paths to greater economic security.

We love to share these stories because even with the difficult headwinds, a better future is possible. And none of what EFAA is able to do would be possible without your support.

On behalf of all of us, thank you.

**Julie Van Domelen**  
Executive Director





# Celebrating Empowerment THROUGH TRAINING AND EDUCATION

## Congratulations to Our Spring Financial Health Course Graduates!



Spring FHC Graduates



“With the Financial Health Course, I stopped being afraid of my finances. I learned how to save money and create a plan to see how I could work it out.”

Anastasia, EFAA Financial Health Course Graduate

Congratulations to the graduates of the Financial Health Course (FHC), sponsored by EFAA, in partnership with Philanthropiece Foundation. EFAA first started sponsoring virtual, 8-week sessions of the introductory-level FHC in August 2021. The customized curriculum was piloted by EFAA’s Participant Advisory Committee (PAC) and Philanthropiece.

This spring, EFAA sponsored in-person sessions, in both English and Spanish, of a newly expanded, 10-week course. The program includes guest speakers who share their expertise on specific topics and offers guidance and support to participants in setting financial goals, creating a budget, establishing a culture of savings, understanding credit scores, building wealth, and learning how to connect with equitable resources in our community. The expanded content was based on feedback from former Financial Health participants and is a great example of how input from EFAA participants continually improves our programs and makes us a stronger organization. To date, more than 70 participants have completed the Financial Health Course and are on their way to planning their financial future. EFAA will be offering another session of the FHC in both English and Spanish this fall.

## Computer Skills Training Class Builds Confidence, Connection, & Community



Computer Skills participants proudly display their graduation certificates.

Congratulations to the 25 English and Spanish language participants who completed the basic computer/digital literacy classes at EFAA in June. Over the course of 8 weeks, these dedicated participants learned the basics of email, how to create documents and presentations, navigate access to online resources, and protect against online fraud. On the final day of class, participants gave presentations they prepared on their Chromebooks, about something special to them. The presentations provided an opportunity for the students to demonstrate some of the computer skills they learned during the training, and support each other as they shared their personal interests. Upon completion of the program, participants received a graduate certificate and got to keep the Chromebook they used during the class.

Bridging Digital Divides (BDD) is a program of Sister Carmen Community Center. It was launched in 2018, to provide basic computer/digital classes to the community. In September 2022, EFAA hosted our first BDD computer class for EFAA participants; and this spring, EFAA funded and sponsored both English and Spanish cohorts of the training program. The classes have been so popular and valuable to our participants that we will be sponsoring four more classes in FY '24.

## FOOD BANK UPDATE

Food insecurity continues to rise in our community compared to last year.



46%



1,901

Households Served



59%



4,810

Individuals Served



67%



19,330

Food Visits



46%



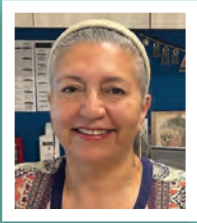
1,096,897 Lbs

of Food Distributed

Source: EFAA Food Bank data for July 1 - March 31, FY '23 vs. July 1 - March 31, FY '22



# Volunteer SPOTLIGHT



## Ema Lyman EFAA BOARD AND PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEMBER

**Q? How long have you been volunteering at EFAA?**

**A.** I've been a volunteer with EFAA for the past 10 years. Since 2012, I have worked for the Boulder Valley School District running the McKinney-Vento Program, which is a federal program to support students who lack stable housing. The program helps students with immediate free and reduced lunch, fees waived and transportation. We work towards stability within the educational arena. I was familiar with EFAA because I would visit the housing sites to find out how we could support the students. I was recruited (by EFAA) to be on the Program Committee and served for 5-6 years, and then I was asked to be on the Board of Directors.

**Q? What are you currently seeing with child homelessness in your role in BVSD?**

**A.** Over the 2022-23 school year we qualified over 800 students as homeless, which is the highest number in years. In fact, it is the highest number since I've held this position.

**Q? Would you put the cause primarily on the cost of housing or are you seeing other circumstances?**

**A.** I think it's a combination. In our community, the cost of housing grows exponentially. In addition, the three years of the COVID pandemic has had unexpected repercussions on students and their families including loss

of jobs. Not everyone had the luxury of being able to work from home, especially the population that is on the brink of homelessness or poverty. They were out of a job, with no income, which resulted in housing loss.

**Q? Can you talk about what your role as an EFAA volunteer has brought to you personally?**

**A.** I came from South America as an immigrant when my father was transferred to Denver for work. I grew up in a dictatorship where you don't have a vote and you can't really talk about politics or anything that has to do with social justice. I really care about social justice — what is right and what is wrong; what people have and don't have, and how that happens. I came to the conclusion that no matter how rich or poor a country may be economically, the points of access are a barrier for one reason or another, and that's what needs to be addressed. EFAA has removed those barriers, especially when helping undocumented families. I believe EFAA is a very equitable organization in that sense. That was a big draw for me to become a volunteer.

**Q? Where do you see yourself and your community engagement in the next 5 years?**

**A.** In a couple of years, I will be retiring, so I will have a little more time on my hands. I really enjoy community-centered hubs. I wish that there was a big community center (in Boulder) that welcomes everybody in various capacities. I would like to get myself involved in an initiative like that.

## Niwot High Student BRINGS VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP SKILLS TO COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS

Ryan started volunteering at the EFAA Food Bank during the pandemic, while he was a sophomore at Niwot High. He was so committed to his role, that he scheduled his classes to allow time for volunteering. He credits his "crew of moms" (Jill, Melissa, and Ann) for encouraging him to become



Food Bank volunteers: Jill, Melissa, Ryan (Shift Lead) & Ann

a shift leader so that he could include it on his college applications. It must have paid off! We wish him all the best as he heads to the University of Georgia this August!

**DON'T MISS THIS CHANCE TO DOUBLE YOUR DONATION TO EFAA!**

Our dear friends, the Leffingwells, will match every dollar you donate up to \$100,000. Deadline: August 31, 2023. Scan here to make your gift.

