



efaa news

FOR *Miguel Cerceda* OF NORTH WASATCH FARMS, GIVING AND RECEIVING HAS COME FULL CIRCLE

For the past few years, Miguel Cerceda, and his daughter Eva, of North Wasatch Farms, have been providing food to EFAA's food bank. They have donated hundreds of dozens of eggs and even a whole hog. Today their farm supplies 180 dozen farm-fresh eggs to EFAA's Food Bank each week, as part of the Local Food Purchase Agreement. Giving back is just Miguel Cerceda's way. But when he was a child, having enough food was a daily struggle for his family, and they relied on EFAA for support.

Miguel's dad worked as a dishwasher in restaurants and his mom cleaned for a local hotel. The family bounced from house to house in Section 8 housing. When Miguel was six years old, he had a bone disease and a learning disability. "Because when you're malnourished, you can't learn. Your body shuts down." He remembers days when he was so hungry that he would go to bed early just because there wasn't any food.

As a child, Miguel would go with his younger brother and mother to EFAA's food bank when it was up on the hill. His mom would bring her list and gather food for the family. It was a small pantry, but for Miguel, "the highlight of my day was taking those granola bars off the shelf." At the time he didn't really understand what a food pantry was, but he always wondered "where does this food come from?"

“ With my brothers and sisters, we would take turns eating off the same plate, just so everybody could get something to eat.” The pain is still so present for Miguel, he tears up as he shares his story. “That’s very hard. There are other people that still do that and that really hurts me inside.”



Miguel continued to struggle academically in high school, but things turned around when he attended trade school. He started working with his hands — painting and creating things, and he realized he had a natural ability to paint. Miguel applied his painting talent to cars and developed his own brand of paint. Today, he runs his own business painting exotic cars. But Miguel has never forgotten his childhood experience.

In 2013, Miguel and his family purchased a parcel of land in Longmont. The land was in rough shape, but by applying generations-old regenerative farming techniques, they transformed the property into a sustainable, efficient operation. Today, North Wasatch Farms supplies eggs and pork, not only to EFAA, but to churches, assisted living facilities, and other community food banks. And Miguel has transformed his childhood curiosity about where the food comes from into “what can I do to be part of the solution.”

The Cerceda family commutes from their home in Berthoud to run the farm. “It’s taken a lot of investment and a lot of hard work on a day-to-day basis, and you can’t take a day off.” Miguel is in the process of petitioning to build a home on the property to make it more feasible for the next generation of his family to continue the farm. “It feels good to give back. Working together as a community is what makes community stronger.”

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 2024

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DOUBLE YOUR DONATION!

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

This newsletter takes a deeper dive into how EFAA finds the more than 1.5 million pounds of food we distribute each year through our food bank. EFAA's food bank exists based from the good will and donations of the community. Over half of our food comes from our key partner agency Community Food Share who acts as the 'wholesale' supplier to the 'retail' food pantries across Boulder and Broomfield Counties. We also use our EFAA food truck to pick up food donations from local grocery stores, receive food donations from local suppliers, and benefit from food drives by numerous community and civic groups. EFAA purchases a small share of the food we distribute, in particular, produce and locally made frozen meals through City of Boulder Health Equity Fund grants, some critical and culturally relevant foods through state food grants, and private donations to stock critical non-food items (diapers, feminine hygiene products, etc.). All of this relies on hundreds of volunteers, who check food shoppers in, help run the day-to-day operations of the food bank, organize food drives, drive the truck to store pick-ups, and deliver boxes to home delivery recipients.

The entire system is currently under unprecedented strain. We continue to see numbers climb of people coming to EFAA for food support. At the same time, we anticipate seeing a falloff in grant funding as some of the COVID-related supports to EFAA operations begin to taper off or end.

What can you do to help?

- If you belong to, or have contacts with, a faith-based organization, civic group, school, business, scout troop, or any kind of social organization, consider doing a food drive for EFAA.
- If you have time and an interest in volunteering, consider joining EFAA's team of volunteers.
- If you are a food producer or local grocery store and can make donations to EFAA, please let us know.
- Please join us Sunday, April 28 at our 2nd Annual Friend Fest, from 3pm – 6pm to learn about and support EFAA.

You can contact us at info@efaa.org.

Thank you for engaging with EFAA's mission of neighbors helping neighbors to create a better community for all,

Julie Van Domelen
Executive Director



WHERE DOES EFAA'S FOOD COME FROM?

UpRoot Colorado

EFAA is committed to providing nutritious, local, high-quality food to the individuals and families who rely on the food bank. To achieve this, EFAA sources food and receives donations from a range of individuals and organizations. UpRoot Colorado is a nonprofit organization that has been a valuable source of high-quality, local produce for EFAA.

In 2023, UpRoot Colorado donated 4,000 pounds of locally grown produce including organic spaghetti, butternut and summer squash, pumpkins, watermelon, cantaloupe, cucumbers, and zucchini to EFAA's food bank. According to Dave Laskarzewski, UpRoot's co-director who manages efforts along the Front Range, UpRoot gathers surplus produce from Colorado farms and orchards through gleaning events, where a team of volunteers gather crops that are leftover after harvest. The produce is of equal quality and nutritional value as produce sold at market. It remains in the field because it either does not meet the cosmetic standards of the retail grocery industry, or due to a lack of available agricultural labor. UpRoot then distributes the produce to food banks and pantries, like EFAA.

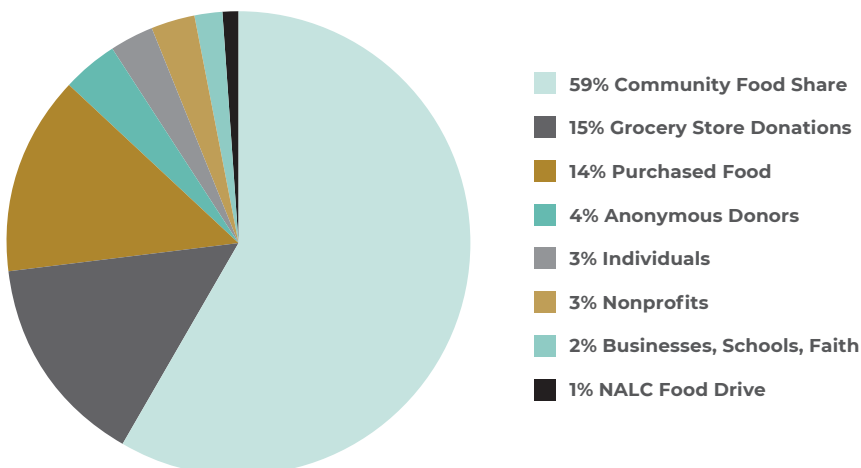
UpRoot was started in the fall of 2016, after *Feeding the 5,000 Front Range*, an event in Denver to raise awareness around food waste. Dave helped organize the gleanings that provided 1,500 pounds of produce for the event. During that process, he was struck by the amount of nutritious, edible food that remained in the fields after harvest and wondered "what can we do with all this food that's left on the ground?" He knew of other localized gleaning events, "but there was no one organization looking at the state (of Colorado) as its own holistic food system, from the standpoint of farm surplus."

Currently more than 31 billion pounds of surplus produce remain on U.S. farm fields each year and there are 11 million acres of farmland in Colorado. UpRoot is helping to recover surplus food in Colorado and support producers, by distributing nutritious food to people who don't have consistent access to healthy food, and by connecting food producers to labor resources and organizations who can help the farms harvest and sell more of what they grow.

Dave sees UpRoot "as a doorway to spending time on a farm, reconnecting with the land, increasing cultural food wisdom, and helping the community by getting food that otherwise wouldn't be harvested into local food pantries so it can be distributed to people who need it. The goal is to create stewardship of the people in the food system and let the power of community reshape the face of our food system." For more information visit uprootcolorado.org.



Where Does EFAA's Food Come From?





Volunteer SPOTLIGHT



MEET Kelly Cope Russack, EFAA'S FOOD DRIVE AMBASSADOR

Kelly started volunteering at EFAA's food bank in the summer of 2022. She had just wrapped up 8 years of co-owning a nonprofit in Boulder, so she was familiar with Boulder's nonprofit landscape, had energy to invest, and a desire to continue giving back to her community.

When she first arrived at the food bank, Kelly was expecting to see some of the natural food brands Boulder is known for lining the shelves, but the shelves were empty. So, she started asking questions about where the food in EFAA's food bank comes from. Where are these brands? Does EFAA have partnerships?

Walter O'Toole, EFAA's food bank manager, told her that food drives were shutdown during COVID, but he was looking for someone to help start them up again. Kelly said "I have some ideas and I'm not afraid of rejection." So, Walter asked her to step in. Kelly got started with an old spreadsheet of past food donors. She cold-called 300 people and organizations and by December, had secured 100 food donations.

At the start of 2023, Kelly was already thinking about summer. She wanted to ensure the food bank would be full when school was out and kids couldn't rely on a daily school

lunch. She started contacting everyone she knew in Boulder's food industry. As her contacts led to more connections, she learned that many of the brands that launched in Boulder no longer maintained warehouses in town once they were acquired by other companies. However, many of them provide products to Conscious Alliance, a local nonprofit that "engages with brands to receive and distribute large-scale food donations." Kelly reached out to Justin Levy, the executive director, and established a partnership between the two organizations. Conscious Alliance is now a regular supplier of packaged food and personal care items to EFAA.

Throughout the year, Kelly also connects with schools, faith organizations, and businesses on their food drive efforts. She provides support materials and guides them through the process, making it easier for everyone to get involved and excited about donating food to EFAA. Kelly enjoys connecting with the community and appreciates how receptive and eager everyone is to provide support. All of us at EFAA are grateful for Kelly's hard work and contributions.

Interested in hosting a food drive? Email fooddrive@efaa.org.



Mark your Calendars TO PARTICIPATE IN THESE SPRING EVENTS!

The 2nd Annual EFAA Friend Fest!

Join us at EFAA Friend Fest on Sunday, April 28th from 3-6pm at Junkyard Social Club. Bring your friends and family for a fun-filled afternoon and opportunity to learn more about EFAA's mission. For tickets and more information scan the QR code or visit efaafriendfest.funraise.org.



Join us Sunday, April 28 for EFAA Friend Fest!

National Volunteer Week

April 21 - 27 is National Volunteer Week. Let's celebrate the more than 500 hardworking EFAA volunteers who make our work possible.

The NALC Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive



The 2024 National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive is Saturday, May 11th. This is the country's largest single-day food drive. Last year's drive brought in over 19,000 pounds of non-perishable food to the EFAA Food Bank.