

Development Report – May 2023

Donor Communications

- It has been approximately four years since the launch of the OneCanFeed.org hunger alleviation campaign. This has been the best tool to get people engaged in our primary mission. The site has been used as our main giving portal and will be adapted for future seasonal appeals. The largest amount of donor traffic comes through this DonorBox/PayPal page.
- We are promoting the new logo and branding for ‘The Market@IFCS’. Our hope is to align more people with this prominent component of our organization and bring deeper meaning to what they donate.
- A print “Community Mid-year Update” appeal and informational letter will be mailed to 7,500 constituents (Late May), who do and do not receive our e-mails from December through May. The last print mailing was in November 2022. Many have not been communicated with for 6 months. This letter will give a quick update on what is going on at IFCS, how recipients can partner with IFCS, and how they can refer our services to others.
- The Development Team is actively adapting communications, engagements, and strategizing on fundraising, donor monetary asks, and food donation appeals.
- We are continuing to adapt future enrichment program registrations and sponsor solicitations. The Ready Set School program has approx. 123 families and 236 kids registered from online communications (through May 17) and will be engaging past sponsors to purchase a pre-made backpack with a gift card from a third-party vendor. An additional appeal will be for monetary donations to provide a supplemental food box with each backpack family. Child sponsors will be engaged to donate financially and are able to select a child from May through July.
- Regular Program Recipient e-newsletter communications have been going out to make people aware of current resources and to sign-up for school supplies. The approach is also to make the community more comfortable with our organization and to instill dignity, respect, and self-worth through communication.
- The traditional Constant Contact Electronic Communications to Donors and Partners will resume in June, to advertise Ready Set School sponsorship opportunities and to further promote the summer giving campaign.
- We will have a targeted social media and general communication campaign focusing on a specific area of IFCS partnership and how we are “Stronger” and “Family” from the support we have received from (June - Businesses, July – Volunteers, and August – Donors and Partners). We don’t want to fatigue our donors but focus on extending information and better educating our constituents (and allowing for future solicitations through the summer). A similar recipient-focused communication will go out to Participants’ e-mail addresses. Our hope is to better inform our clients of available services and to bridge the possibility that our clients can become donors /connectors and that the donors that support us know how they can receive resources from us.
- A large percentage of our donors have not given yet this season and we expect that they will respond in the second half of the giving calendar year and Q1 of the fiscal year.
- Many in-person meetings with service clubs, chambers, and churches are scheduled or have taken place in the past weeks. The option of having a virtual meeting has made it even more viable to connect how it is most convenient. Communications are going out to primary supporters to check in and see how we can continue to partner through the remainder of the year.
- Todd has started to strategize and set up a list of people that would like to meet in person now that there is a comfort level post-pandemic.
- Program and Development Teams are discussing future campaigns to see how we can tweak the upcoming communications and incorporate fresh language to pique interest and better explain our current needs and goals.

Donor Interaction

- Working with donors to take advantage of matching gifts and challenge gifts from their organization
- Tapping into new donor relationships and continuing to reach out to partners that help us with large fundraising campaigns – United Healthcare, O'Tooles, Christian Brothers, Movement Mortgage, Empower Retirement, Kaiser Permanente, etc.
- Effort continues to be made to help our partners and sponsors to find unique ways to fundraise for IFCS.
- The USPS Stamp Out Hunger national event on May 13th brought in approx. 30 tons of food from the Centennial and Englewood Post Offices
- Working with some local businesses/franchises to be featured as a Grand Opening Community Partner – Sweetgreen is opening a University Hills location in September and Snarf's Sandwiches is opening in Highlands Ranch and Littleton in Q3 or Q4. If you know of a business that is opening and that IFCS may gain some contributions and /or promotional exposure, please let Sandra or Todd know and we can pursue the possibilities.

Development Planning

- Engaging with new and increased financial donors to keep relationship flowing.
- Strategizing changes in asks, enrichment, and food donation appeals
- The 2024 Nibbles and Sips event is being planned for Saturday February 24th at the same hotel, Hyatt Regency DTC. This will be a carbon copy of the 2023 successful event.

Food banks brace for surge in demand as COVID-era benefits end, Denver Post March 1, 2023

Colorado's food banks are expecting a surge in demand over the coming weeks as extra pandemic food assistance is cut off. Since March 2020, people who qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps, have received the maximum legal allotment for their household size. Starting Wednesday, the program will revert to its previous formula, based on household income and certain expenses, such as rent and utilities.

The Colorado Department of Human Services estimated the average person receiving SNAP benefits in the state will lose about \$90 in assistance per month, for a roughly \$53 million monthly reduction overall. In January, monthly payments averaged about \$538 per household in Colorado, and about 553,000 people in more than 291,000 households received food assistance.

The "emergency allotments" were supposed to expire when the federal public health emergency ends in May, but Congress opted to end them early. **Nearly 30 million people nationwide** will see their food assistance reduced this month. Eighteen states have already reduced benefits, affecting about 10 million people.

Erin Pulling, president and CEO of Food Bank of the Rockies, said the organization estimated its costs for purchasing food to share with its 800 partners could rise 20% based on increased need, though it's difficult to project demand.

But while the exact amount is uncertain, the general direction is clear, she said. "We're hearing a lot of fear, both from people experiencing food insecurity and from our partners," Pulling said. "Our food costs have already tripled compared to pre-COVID."

Food Bank of the Rockies spends about \$1.5 million each month on purchasing food, in addition to distributing donated items, Pulling said. The increase in costs has come from a combination of rising food prices, more families reporting need, the decision to offer more fresh produce and relatively low donations from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's commodities purchases, she said. Allie Hoffman, director of impact and engagement at **We Don't Waste**, said the organization's **mobile markets** have kept hitting new records for attendance in recent months. For example, 231 families sought food at a market in northwest Aurora in February 2022, but 432 did at the same location this February, she said.

We Don't Waste partners with grocery stores, schools and other organizations that have excess food that's usable but otherwise would be thrown out. "We're, admittedly, pretty nervous because we had already seen an increase in demand," she said. "We're working hard to get more donors and get more food." Visitation is up 40% at Harvest of Hope's food pantry in Boulder, officials wrote in a **late February press release**. The executive director of Emergency Family Assistance Association **told Boulder City Council in December** that its food bank, which serves Boulder County, was serving more people than at any point in its 100-year history. "Over the last 6 months, EFAA's food bank is receiving 50 percent more visits than this time last year," Julie VanDomelen wrote in an email to city council members in mid-February. "The tsunami of evictions, economic stress, and food insecurity predicted during Covid is in fact arriving now, just as Covid support programs begin to wind down."

SNAP currently provides over \$5 million in food assistance each month to over 20,000 people in Boulder County, according to Harvest of Hope officials. Benefits are doled out at the beginning of each month; business at the pantry picks up as the month wears on and money runs out for their clients. VanDomelen urged Boulder's elected officials to pursue a number of policy changes to support working families, including **increasing the area's minimum wage**, fund programs that increase access to affordable childcare, and gear the city's **pending guaranteed income pilot** toward families with children. The best thing people interested in helping their neighbors can do is to donate money, Pulling said. Because the food bank purchases 15 truckloads of food each week, it gets bulk rates and can buy much more for each dollar than an individual could at their grocery store, she said. Hoffman said that while most of the food We Don't Waste distributes is donated, the organization needs cash to keep its trucks and warehouse running. People can also help by volunteering to help move food and by calling their state and federal representatives to urge they invest more in anti-hunger programs, she said.

Legislative help in the works

The Colorado General Assembly recently approved \$14 million in **supplemental funding for the Department of Human Services** to distribute to food banks and pantries, which is now awaiting Gov. Jared Polis' signature. Polis's office was involved in crafting the request and pushing it through, so he's expected to sign it, said Sen. Lisa Cutter, a Jefferson County Democrat. "I'm really proud that our state leaders acted so quickly," she said. "This is a food crisis." Separate measures would also fund specific efforts to fight food insecurity. **Senate Bill 23-27** would appropriate \$3 million each year through 2027 for the state's food pantry assistance program, which focuses on encouraging pantries to form partnerships with local farmers and to stock items that fit the culture of the area, such as offering buffalo as a protein choice in Indigenous communities, Cutter said.

That's the same amount the program received in 2022, but down from \$5 million in 2020 and 2021, she said. In the two years before the pandemic, it received \$500,000 or less. Another proposal, **House Bill 23-1158**, would set aside \$1 million in additional funding for county human services departments and nonprofits to buy food packages for low-income people who are at least 60. The existing funding doesn't fully cover the cost of the boxes for the 14,000 participants, according to Feeding Colorado.

Both bills are still in their respective appropriations committees. They would have to pass the committees and both houses, then secure the governor's signature before taking effect.

Most severe for elderly, disabled

Elissa Hardy, director of client services at Hunger Free Colorado, said the impact of the end of the pandemic aid will be most severe for older people and those with disabilities, because of the way the food assistance program counts income from Social Security. She advised anyone facing hardship to reach out to Hunger Free Colorado or another nonprofit for advice on which expenses they can claim, to increase their monthly allotment. Losing some food assistance money has an impact on people's physical and mental health, both because they may worry about how to make ends meet and because they lose some independence, Hardy said. Food pantries

are a valuable resource, but recipients have to work around their hours and accept whatever is available, even if it's not what they'd prefer to eat, she said.

“If you have a SNAP (earned benefits transfer) card, you can use that to go into a store and buy food,” she said.

The Colorado Department of Human Services said that families can roll over unused food assistance dollars for up to nine months, which may help smooth the transition. It also **recommended taking steps to stretch food**, like freezing produce before it goes bad, stocking up on canned goods and planning meals carefully, to maximize each ingredient.

Hoffman said those aren't bad ideas, but there's a limit to what individual families can do. Food insecurity needs solutions at multiple levels, with more federal and state funding to supplement the work local nonprofits do, she said.

“Sometimes you can't do more with less,” she said. “You can only do less with less. This is not a moral failing on the parts of these families.”