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Record Breaking Hunger: Small Nonprofit Hopes Community Support Will Sustain Their No-Cost Food Market

With reduced SNAP benefits and a lack of affordable housing, food support is a survival necessity for low-income households.

DENVER, CO, April 18, 2023 – Inflation has slowed, but food prices remain historically high; meanwhile, cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) began in March. With SNAP recipients receiving approximately \$90 less per person per month (\$360 per month for a family of 4), hundreds of Coloradans have reduced access to healthy meals. The current housing crisis adds to the financial strain; a recent report shows *over half* of very low-income families have no affordable housing options.¹ **Food support is a lifeline for these families, helping them put healthy meals on the table and keep a roof over their heads.** Integrated Family Community Services (IFCS), a small nonprofit that partners with the community to alleviate hunger, is working hard to respond to record-breaking hunger this year.

INCREASED HUNGER IN COLORADO

IFCS has nearly tripled its services over the past 3 years, providing more food support to metro Denver area families than ever in its 59-year history. Last month alone, visits to IFCS fed 3,260 individuals (866 households), 483 of which were first-time visitors to the nonprofit. IFCS' March support in the community is valued at \$445,110, with food sourced from TEFAP and purchased in bulk using donations from supporters.

MORE SUSTAINABLE FOOD SUPPORT THAT OFFERS CHOICES

To address the drastically increased hunger in a sustainable way, IFCS was forced to limit visits to their food market to once per month beginning March 1, 2023. Community support in the form of end-of-year donations helped the nonprofit stock its food market and adjust operations—from a pandemic model of distributing pre-made grocery boxes, to an indoor market that offers a range of self-selected grocery staples. Program participants now enter the building and, with volunteer assistance, select from available food items in quantities allowed for their household size. **The new, more personalized shopping experience allows participants to choose groceries they like or know how to cook, which also reduces waste.** No longer given a pre-boxed assortment of food items they may or may not use, participants now decide which items will work best for their

¹ https://www.coloradocoalition.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/3PgSummary_COAffordableHousingCrisis_StrategicInvestmentReport_CCH_2023.pdf

families. IFCS, known for fostering self-sufficiency and respecting the dignity of each person, is living its mission: creating a grocery market of belonging and equal opportunity allows shoppers to feel respected and supported without shame. Says Sandra Blythe-Perry, IFCS Executive Director, “their burden of ‘not having enough’ is lifted, and they’re so appreciative of what is provided in the new indoor market.”

REFRESHING SUPPORT

Through community partnerships and donor support, IFCS is providing fresh and nutritious food to low-income families at no cost. Those experiencing food insecurity may visit the Market at IFCS once per month. During a visit, each individual or small household is provided with 75-100 lbs of groceries, including fresh produce such as brussels sprouts, cucumbers, tomatoes, oranges, cabbage; dairy products such as milk, cheese, and yogurt; and protein items such as chicken, fish, shrimp, and eggs.

CURRENT NEEDS

A new challenge that emerged for managing a “market of choice” is its need for more volunteer support; if 6 volunteers are not available for one of the Market’s morning or afternoon shifts, IFCS cannot open. Volunteers with bilingual Spanish or Vietnamese speaking skills are especially needed. To learn about IFCS volunteer opportunities and sign up to help, visit:

<https://ifcs.org/volunteer-core/>

IFCS struggles to meet growing hunger needs. With the high demand for food assistance, the small nonprofit is already at a \$38K budget deficit, only 6 months into their fiscal year (Sept. 2022 to Feb. 2023). Donations keep the Market shelves stocked, and may be made at:

<https://ifcs.org/donate/>

ABOUT INTEGRATED FAMILY COMMUNITY SERVICES

Integrated Family Community Services (IFCS) provides basic human services and enrichment programs to low-income people using community resources. IFCS fosters self-sufficiency and respects the dignity of each client. IFCS traditionally served families in the South Denver metro area; however, due to the increased demand for food support in recent years, IFCS has expanded to serve the greater Denver metro area.

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If you would like more information about this topic, or to arrange a visit to IFCS, please call Donna Wintz at (970) 682-0075, or email donnaw@ifcs.org.

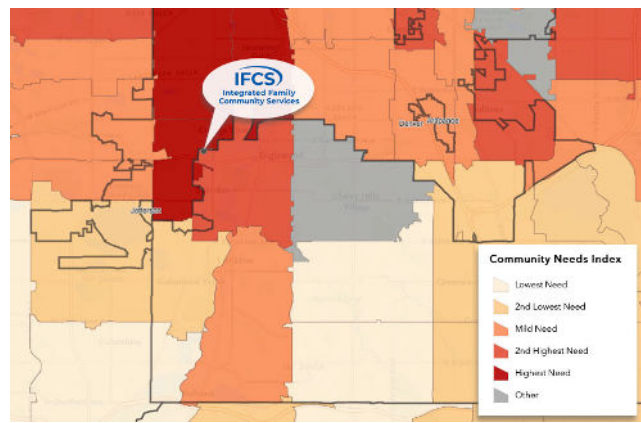
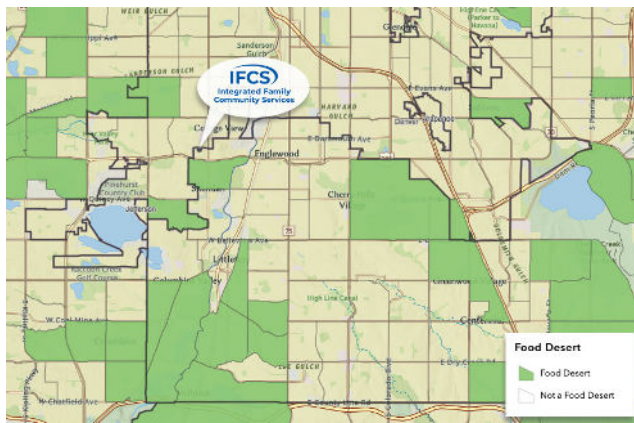
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Hunger facts from Hunger Free Colorado (hungerfreecolorado.org):

- 1 in 3 Coloradans (33%) are struggling with hunger.
- More than 2 in 5 (43%) of individuals of color are now struggling to regularly access quality nutritious food.
- 1 in 6 Children (16%) are not getting adequate nutrition.

See this data and more in a [Hunger Fact Sheet](#).

IFCS’ service area includes various neighborhoods designated as “food deserts” and zip codes identified as having highest needs, as you can see by these maps. Source credit: [CACFP Participation in Colorado](#)



The Program Participation Graph (right) shows a persistence, and continual rise, in food insecurity.

