Rob and his children didn’t always need help. For 12 years, the Air Force vet and computer engineer worked at Lockheed Martin.

Then, the 2008 Recession hit, and he got laid off.

The misfortune snowballed. His wife filed for divorce shortly after Rob’s job loss. Their home foreclosed. His extreme stress combined with underlying conditions led to a heart attack. For years, Rob underwent numerous, unsuccessful operations. As his health complications escalated, doctors told him he would never work again.

Without income, Rob, Nikki (his daughter), and Ryan (his son) became homeless.

They spent years shifting between staying with friends, depending on short-term housing, and sharing a single bedroom. At one point, they even lived in their car — a period that Nikki and Rob refer to as “road tripping.”

Eventually, they found stable housing in Longmont. But their food situation? They survived on “pizza, ramen, instant coffee,” Rob chuckled. “Being poor, all you get is carbs, carbs, carbs.”

With Nikki’s insistence, Rob finally began looking for food assistance. “He’s terrible at asking for help,” she stated wryly. He felt ashamed and nervous that organizations “would treat you like a criminal.” But getting healthy food for his children outweighed his hesitation.

During his first visit to our Feeding Families pantry, Rob immediately noticed the fresh produce. When he brought home a cantaloupe, Ryan incredulously asked, “Is that for...us?” They relished it the next morning with toast and eggs — it was the first fresh fruit they’d had in five months.

What stood out most was how the pantry felt “happy.” For Rob, “It felt like...friends. It’s the people that make this place. They’re helpful, nice. You’re treated like a normal person. You feel human.”

Since that first visit, Rob has become part of the Community Food Share family. Thanks to your support, he’s able to visit the pantry every Thursday with Nikki, now an International Business and Law student at CU Boulder. And Ryan? He volunteers when school’s out.

While Rob and his children’s story is unique, it echoes the lesson in many others: bad things sometimes happen to good people. And when they do, asking for help is hard — but it’s one of the most courageous things you can do.
Hello!

Though you're reading this newsletter in May — or as late as July — I'm writing this note to you on March 20. It's the end of the first week that COVID-19 took a noticeable toll on our operations. Before this pandemic hit, 40,000 of our neighbors already relied on the food that our network provides. This week, our Louisville-based pantry served a record-breaking number of households — evidence that as layoffs continue at a staggering rate, more community members are needing help for the first time.

While everything else seems to be changing around us, our commitment to our mission will not. Moving millions of pounds of food is what we are built to do; this pandemic only exemplifies the importance of our work.

Amid the anxiety and fear, it feels almost trivial to include stories in this newsletter that are unrelated to coronavirus. But then I remind myself that, although the bulk of our team's time, effort, and emotions are devoted to COVID-19 response, we have the rest of our normal business to somehow carry on...including fundraising. We expect a shortfall in funds that equates to hundreds of thousands of dollars that we would have raised through events we have cancelled. It's a conservative estimate, and it doesn't include the resources necessary to keep up with the impending increase in need. And so we're continuing to tell you about the many ways to support our efforts, including legacy giving and our newest offering: socially-conscious birthday parties.

By the time you're reading this, the state of our community, our country, and our world may look very different. I hope we will have turned a corner on this crisis; however, lost wages, school closings, and medical hardships are likely to impact our neighbors for many months to come. Whatever the future holds, know that Community Food Share is here for the long haul. With your continued support, we will ensure those affected will have the food they need well into the future.

Sincerely,

Kim Ruotsala
Executive Director

Volunteer Spotlight

Danone North America

For 23 years, Danone North America has shown us unmatched generosity. Their response to the pandemic has been no exception. When the virus's effect on our community first began to escalate, Danone immediately responded by contributing $220,000 to our Rapid Response Fund, allowing us to purchase emergency truckloads of food. And their employees responded to our plea for volunteers, helping us implement our new distribution model. All of this in addition to the 25 million meals worth of funds and food donated before COVID-19 hit. In a time of uncertainty, we take heart, knowing Danone remains committed to boosting our community's resilience.

Our volunteer Wayne loads groceries into a participant's truck on day two of our modified, drive-through pantry. The snow didn't stop us!
Birthday Parties at Community Food Share

Want to celebrate your child’s birthday while helping others in the community? Host a socially-conscious birthday party at our warehouse, starting in July! It’s a new opportunity to teach kids about local hunger and how everyone can make a difference, regardless of age.

You invite the guests, bring the treats, and recruit a couple of adults to help supervise. We’ll show you how the food bank moves 80 pounds of food a minute (!) during our tour, followed by a kid-friendly discussion about hunger. Then, party-goers dive in to a volunteer activity. When it’s time to sing, eat, and celebrate, we’ll have a space reserved just for you.

Pair your party with a fund or food drive, and our team will help you and the birthday kiddo set a meal goal. Every $1 donated provides 3 meals! A suggested donation of $100 is due at booking to cover staff time for each party.

WHEN
3:30-5:30 PM
2nd & 4th Thursdays
beginning in July

COST
$100 suggested donation

HOW TO SCHEDULE
Contact Blair Middleton at bmiddleton@communityfoodshare.org

SHARE YOUR MEMORIES

Community Food Share turns 40 next year! In preparation for our anniversary celebration, we invite volunteers, participants, donors, and Partner Agencies to share their Community Food Share memories with us.

Submit your memory now at communityfoodshare.org/story

From left, Mary Althauser, Mark Retzloff, Kathy Coyne, Sue Mitrovic, and Bill Bower (former staff, volunteers, and board members) check inventory and sort food at Community Food Share’s warehouse in the early 1990s.
Legacy Giving

Community Food Share offers many opportunities for legacy giving: bequests, beneficiary designations, life insurance arrangements, endowments, and more. If you’re unable to give a major gift today, planned giving can help you make a powerful impact in the future.

These gifts come with meaningful benefits to you, including notable tax advantages, control over how your funds are spent, and the joy of creating a lasting legacy. Did you know that when you leave a gift to Community Food Share from your IRA, income tax is waived, granting the entire balance to our food bank? One of the easiest — and often forgotten — opportunities includes naming your favorite charity as the beneficiary of life insurance policies. Many donors purchase an additional policy to benefit Community Food Share, while others list us on their existing policies.

You can support our mission to end local hunger today, tomorrow, and into the future. To find the option that’s best for you, contact Dina Coates Koebler, Chief Development Officer, at (303) 652-3663 ext. 207 or dcoateskoebler@communityfoodshare.org.

Corporate Challenge — Extended into June

A friendly (yet fierce) competition among local companies to raise dollars and collect funds for Community Food Share. There’s still time for your company to join us for the 25th year of this event — now virtual!

In light of COVID-19, several of our events have been cancelled, postponed, or moved online. Visit communityfoodshare.org/events for more details.