COMMUNITY ALLIANCE
For Education And Hunger Relief

GROWN
FOR YOU!

FARM FRESH PRODUCE Brought TO YOU BY OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS
THE COMMUNITY ALLIANCE for
EDUCATION AND HUNGER RELIEF

Our mission and approach

The lack of healthy food has profound effects on physical and mental health, educational attainment, and self-sufficiency. Inconsistent access to healthy food, or FOOD INSECURITY, is a public health issue. Accordingly, federal, state and community-based programs comprising our food safety net are committed to providing access to food that supports active, healthy lifestyles.

With 1 in 10 adults and 1 in 6 children in Colorado experiencing food insecurity¹, there is much work to be done. The mission of the Community Alliance for Education and Hunger Relief (Community Alliance) is to improve the health of our community by increasing access to fresh produce for individuals experiencing food insecurity.

As a program of Colorado State University Agriculture Experiment Station and Colorado State University Extension, we design programs with double impact on both food insecurity and education. Specifically, we work collaboratively with our community to:

- increase the access to healthy food by producing and distributing fresh fruits and vegetables through the community food system;
- raise awareness of food insecurity in our community and support the implementation of the **Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger**, which lays out the vision, goals, and strategies needed so that all Coloradans have access to affordable and healthy food in their communities;
- integrate civic service with hands-on learning in agriculture, life sciences, food systems, food insecurity and nutrition for people of all ages; and
- provide post-secondary students hands-on learning in large scale agriculture and community-nutrition.


Contact Us

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Community Alliance for Education and Hunger Relief
2017-2018
TWO YEAR IMPACTS

Fruits and Vegetables

- Within food banks, fresh produce is among the most requested but most difficult product to provide.
- We grew and donated 173,472 pounds of fruits and vegetables for hunger relief.

Raising Awareness

- Volunteerism is an effective way to engage people to identify, understand and solve problems.
- Volunteers gave 1,315 hours of service through our program in 2017/2018.

K-12 Education

- Pairing meaningful service of growing and giving food to others enhances the learning experience for thousands of K-12 students who have come to the research center to plant, harvest and learn.
- We have taught 7,267 hours of student-learning in the fields and classrooms in our two years of programming.

Post-Secondary Education

- With our unique combination of mission, facilities, faculty and staff, we provide participatory and engaged learning opportunities to help train the next generation working in food and agriculture.
- We have provided 2,430 hours of paid hands on internship experience to post-secondary students in the past two years.

Thank you to our 2018 Donors

The BACON FAMILY FOUNDATION

The McCary Family Fund

The Community Food & Hunger Relief Fund
We support

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Growing and distributing produce

The Community Alliance is based at the CSU Western Colorado Research Center in Grand Junction, Colorado. In partnership with the agriculture sciences program at Western Colorado Community College, we cultivated four acres of high-value vegetables as a part of our FARM-TO-FOODBANK program. In 2018, we grew 80,657 pounds of produce, with a dip in production from 2017 due to the retirement of valued staff who grew and processed dry pinto beans. We benefited from the expertise of staff at the Arkansas Valley Research Center who grew and donated thousands of pepper plants.

Part of the harvests was delivered locally to food banks and pantries, meal programs, youth organizations and educators. We partnered with the Food Bank of the Rockies to distribute most of our produce throughout 14 counties on the Western Slope and Denver. We grew vegetables that are familiar and in high demand, but also varieties that might encourage food bank patrons to try new foods. Apples, peaches, cherries and corn not needed for research were harvested and donated from the Orchard Mesa, Rogers, and Fruita individual research stations that comprise the Western Colorado Research Center.

Cultivating community partnerships

To encourage the consumption of healthy produce, we engage, inspire, and educate using the food we grow, the fields and orchards we tend, and the collaborations we develop.

In 2018, we worked with local food pantries to develop educational and promotional materials that encouraged patrons to try unfamiliar produce and learn about its preparation (more pg 8). We continued our support of We Can! Mesa County, a group focused on community-based nutrition education, by providing garden space and facilities for We Can! families to grow, harvest, cook and eat together.

We supported the Community Transformation Project led by the Mesa County Health Department through our partnerships with St. Mary’s Medical Center and the Riverside Education Center. We donated produce to St. Mary’s Hospital Food on the Move Program, which distributed it to families attending the Community Transformation Project neighborhood festivals. Riverside Education Center students helped plant and harvest food again this year, culminating in the second annual REC Family Farmers Market at Rocky Mountain Elementary School.

We continued our FARM-TO-SCHOOL partnership in 2018 with Mesa County Valley School District 51. Area students planted and harvested during field trips and those experiences are made more tangible and meaningful when their food was offered on school cafeteria salad bars. We supported the summer school lunch program, the Lunch Lizard, through our donations of lettuce, cucumbers and cherry tomatoes. In total, we donated over 5,600 pounds of fresh produce to area schools and the summer meal program. We worked to connect School District 51 Nutrition Services with local producers so that more local produce can be served in school cafeterias and on the Lunch Lizard.
We are raising

AWARENESS OF HUNGER

Engaging through volunteerism

Our program would not succeed without the hundreds of volunteers who donate their time and talents in planting, harvesting, and teaching. This civic service strengthens our community, enriches the lives of volunteers, and enhances awareness and engagement about hunger in our community.

In 2018, 181 volunteers worked with our program, giving us 637 hours of their time. Many of our volunteers are families that want to contribute to their community while enjoying a healthy, outdoor activity with their children.

Our volunteers are vital to our program, and we thank them by sending produce home to share with their families. Volunteers harvested 31% of the total donated fruits and vegetables. With minimal training, our volunteers are able to work safely and effectively, without impacting the operations of the research center. In addition to gaining a broader understanding of food insecurity, volunteers develop insights into local agriculture and the role of the CSU Agriculture Experiment Stations. Volunteer events make the research center a more community-engaged space and connect CSU with people who have not previously interacted with the University.

Increasing public understanding

In addition to engaging volunteers, we raise awareness of food insecurity in our community by leading informational tours about the work being done at the research center and going off-site to speak with churches, community groups and businesses. The Community Alliance participates in the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger 2/3 Workgroup, the Mesa County Blueprint to End Hunger committee, and the Mesa County Valley School District 51 Wellness Committee.

We work to increase the role agriculture plays in fighting hunger by increasing the awareness of local farmers of the benefits of donating fresh produce to hunger relief organizations. By understanding the process ourselves, we provide accurate advice on the logistics of donating, connect farmers to food banks, and supply plastic reusable crates that can be used for donation. We are happy to see initiatives such as the Food Pantry Assistance Grant that provides money to hunger relief organizations to buy food from Colorado Proud producers. We have become a resource to food pantries seeking advice on how to they can find producers and the seasonality of Colorado agricultural products.

“Colorado agriculture, local business leaders and farmers are critical to healthy food distribution and access.” The Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger, endhungerco.org p20. As leaders in Agriculture in this state, the CSU Agriculture Experiment Stations and CSU Extension have the local relationships and experience to help agricultural producers play a major role in fighting hunger.
We educate students in the FIELD and CLASSROOM

Teaching students through service learning

In 2018, over 1,100 students came from area schools and youth groups to learn by doing. This represented 3,880 hours of student learning at the research center. They started seedlings in the greenhouse, planted and harvested vegetables in the field, and picked fruit in the orchards. We work with educators to enrich the visit by providing STEM-based activities or an overview of the research conducted on site. We make the learning more meaningful by connecting it to the larger civic service of providing the healthy food to our community.

Many of our student visitors come back throughout the growing season to participate in a wide variety of activities. In partnership with the Riverside Education Center and the Eureka McConnell Science Museum, students in the “Dig In!” agricultural camp regularly cared for a small Service Learning Garden and participated in lessons in horticulture, local agriculture, food systems, nutrition and food insecurity.

We extended our engagement off the farm by providing special projects, curriculum and expertise in agriculture, food systems, food insecurity and nutrition in four area schools, the Riverside Education Center, and the Eureka McConnell Science Museum.

Delivering nutrition education

As an integral component of any student field trip, volunteer event and youth camp, we celebrate healthy food with the purpose of encouraging students to eat more fruits and vegetables. We wash or prepare produce in advance of a visit and find that students are more likely to try a fruit or vegetable after they have planted or harvested it at the research center. During field trips, we teach students how to identify healthy foods and the impact of providing healthy foods through food banks and pantries.

In partnership with Eureka McConnell Science Museum and CSU Extension Agent Ann Duncan MS, RD, we hosted a new two-day summer camp focused on cooking and nutrition. The “Cooking in the Garden” campers spent mornings learning and harvesting, then prepared easy and healthy after-school snacks and a healthy meal. The campers organized a free farmers market for their families at the end of camp.

We supported 900 students at Central High School with their problem-based learning unit focused on nutrition, food insecurity and food production. We worked with a local business, food banks and teachers to revamp a school district-wide holiday food drive into a “Healthy Food Drive.” This initiative brought healthier food into hunger relief organizations and gave teachers real-life opportunities to talk to students about nutritious foods.
We provide

UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES
in higher education

Providing hands-on internships

SMALL ACREAGE VEGETABLE PRODUCTION

Using its facilities, faculty and staff, Colorado State University provides exceptional learning opportunities in the agricultural sciences. In 2018, the Community Alliance provided 1,287 hours of paid agriculture internships for three post-secondary students from the Western Colorado Community College (WCCC). These interns managed the greenhouse, helped develop the farm layout, established the planting, fertilizing, and harvesting schedules, set-up and maintained the irrigation systems, and implemented integrated pest-control management practices. The interns harvested about 30% of the produce that went to food banks.

They obtained leadership experience by overseeing volunteer work events during community harvests, working with K-12 students, and training new interns as they were hired throughout the season.

We support agricultural education on the Western Slope by enriching the WCCC agriculture science program. Through this collaboration, students enrolled in WCCC classes gained hands-on experience in seedling propagation, vegetable and herb production, pest management, and agriculture machinery.

PRODUCE SAFETY

We maintain the same standards of safety and quality for our donated produce as would be expected if the produce was sold. This reflects our principle for equal treatment of people regardless of their resources and provides important training for our interns. We received assistance in developing our farm safety plan from two CSU Produce Safety Graduate Fellows. Our WCCC interns were integral in implementing and maintaining our produce safety practices.

INCREASING CONSUMPTION OF FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

We mentored a CSU Extension Intern, Aisha Martinek, who had interests in consumer behavior within a food system. She conducted literature reviews into the best practices food pantries use to encourage patrons to select and use unfamiliar produce. She visited two local food pantries to identify how those practices might be applied locally. She identified the need for colorful signs that labeled the produce, which had dual effect of conveying our respect of the food and its consumer. She observed that patrons often asked the pantry volunteer for advice on vegetable preparation, which lead us to develop educational material for the food pantry volunteers and staff. Finally, she increased our outreach to food pantry clients so they would know about opportunities to participate in our harvests and bring home food for their family. We are building on this work with local food pantries in 2019.
People are **TAKING NOTICE**

In print

**She has a lot on her plate**

CSU helps busy activist feed hungry

The Daily Sentinel | July 7, 2018, 1A. Across the country, hundreds of agriculture research centers support local farmers through innovative research. But only one is pushing the limits of these centers’ traditional roles by launching a large-scale initiative to help end hunger in its community...

https://communityalliance.extension.colostate.edu/in-the-news/

**Kudos to CSU for empowering pioneer**

The Daily Sentinel | July 10, 2018, 4A. Sometimes collaborations make so much sense that it’s hard to believe someone had to come up with the idea...

https://communityalliance.extension.colostate.edu/in-the-news/

**20th Anniversary Year High Impact Grants**

Community Alliance for Education and Hunger Relief

Western Colorado Community Foundation 2017 Annual Report | January 2018, 5. Our Community Foundation celebrated its 20th anniversary year by awarding high impact grants across our region. These special one-time grants were made to address documented unmet needs in the community, support creative solutions, and require collaboration between organizations to deliver the program...

http://wc-cf.org/about/news-publications/

Online

**One West Slope County is Aiming to End Child Hunger, One Fruit and Veggie at a Time**

Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger | January 2018. Sometimes the right people just end up in the right places and a previously insurmountable problem becomes a solvable issue. Consider these three points of individual light in Mesa County.

https://www.endhungerco.org/the-people
There is still

MORE TO COME

New Programming and Facilities

Colorado State University is investing in rural communities by making infrastructure improvements that transition Agriculture Experiment Stations into CSU “Satellite Campuses.” These investments include new facilities at the Western Colorado Research Center. New classrooms and a 30-seat demonstration kitchen will allow the Community Alliance to greatly expand its onsite educational programming, especially in nutrition. In preparation, we are developing new nutrition education curriculum for people of all ages with help from students seeking Masters Degrees in Dietetics. We are also mentoring a CSU Extension intern in the summer of 2019 who will customize more STEM lessons specifically for our facilities and educational mission.

Statewide Expansion

In collaboration with the CSU One Health Institute, we received a grant from the CSU Office of Vice President of Research. This grant will, in part, help us support four other CSU Research Centers and Extension Agents across the state engage in community-based food insecurity work.

Since the resources and needs of each center and community, we anticipate that different models of food insecurity engagement will be developed. With this valuable experience, we will develop toolkits that will support Agriculture Experiment Station and Cooperative Extensions across the nation in expanding their roles in hunger relief.

Diversifying Funding

In our first two years of programming, we have been supported by generous philanthropic donors who believed in our mission and our ability to implement it. These donations have been critical in funding the vegetable production program, which is the core around which we build education and outreach.

While our funding will always rely, in some part, on philanthropic giving, we are committed over the next two years to diversifying our revenue sources. As we build new collaborations and make our programs more efficient, we will be competitive for governmental and national nongovernmental grants. We are developing other revenue streams of sales, service or fees that are consistent, but not competitive with, our mission.
LEARN MORE

communityalliance.colostate.extension.edu

ENGAGE

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