

## GUEST OPINION

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## MICHELLE ORGE: SEPTEMBER IS HUNGER ACTION MONTH

Food insecurity is an issue Community Food Share addresses throughout the entire year, but September marks an annual movement among food banks across the country. Organized by Feeding America, the nation's largest hunger relief charity, Hunger Action Month is a nationwide effort to spark local advocacy, awareness, and support. It is an opportunity to have conversations with friends, neighbors, and co-workers about the often hidden epidemic of hunger.

In Boulder and Broomfield Counties, we have thriving communities. We are proud of our leading universities and schools, the innovation and growth of our businesses, and our shrinking unemployment rates. Not to mention our mountain views, 300 days of sun, outdoorsy lifestyle, and an impressive food scene. In the midst of these positive aspects, issues like hunger are often overlooked, even though 47,000 people are experiencing it every day. Thirteen percent of our population—that's 1 in 8 people—lack consistent access to the food they need.

Community Food Share exists to fight this striking reality. This Hunger Action Month, we want you to know that we are not just one organization; we are a network of partners, working together to end hunger in our communities. Locally, we provide food to more than 40 non-profits in Boulder and Broomfield Counties. These organizations rely on Community Food Share for much of the food they use to stock their pantry shelves and prepare hot meals. Statewide, we are part of Feeding Colorado, a coalition of food banks that ensures every county in Colorado is being served. We work together to source fresh foods from Colorado farmers and manufacturers, and we share best practices. On a national level, we are a member of Feeding America, the nationwide network of food banks. Our affiliation with Feeding America gives us access to many resources, including food donations from national retailers, grant funding, and administrative and operational support through shared strategies and tools.

I have been a "food banker" in the Feeding America network for more than fifteen years. My commitment to food banking stems heavily from the pride I find in the collaborative spirit of our network that takes shape on so many levels. Hunger Action Month is an opportunity to recognize our work with our local, statewide, and national partners in hunger relief, and I invite you to join the movement on the level that speaks loudest to you.

While the magnitude of the problem can be overwhelming, it is important to understand that even small acts can make a lasting impact. Take action this month:

- Volunteer at our warehouse as an individual or with a group. Sort food, stock pantry shelves, or help pantry visitors select groceries. Visit [www.communityfoodshare.org/get-involved](http://www.communityfoodshare.org/get-involved) to register.
- Support Community Food Share with a gift at [www.communityfoodshare.org](http://www.communityfoodshare.org). Every \$1 donated provides three meals.
- Donate non-perishable foods or fresh produce from your garden.
- Take a tour of Community Food Share! Call (303) 652-3663 to schedule.

- Join the national conversation by taking an Empty Plate Selfie – find a paper plate, scribble what you couldn't do on an empty stomach and post a photo to social media with #HungerActionMonth. Tag @CommunityFoodShare and @FeedingAmerica.

If you'd like to learn more about Community Food Share, including volunteer opportunities or a list of organizations that receive food from us, please visit [www.communityfoodshare.org](http://www.communityfoodshare.org).

If you or someone you know needs food assistance, please visit our website or call us at (303) 652-3663. For assistance in accessing SNAP or other food and nutrition resources, call the Hunger Free Hotline at (855) 855-4626.

*Michelle Orge is executive director of Community Food Share in Louisville.*

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## **About Community Food Share**

Community Food Share's mission is to be a leader in our community's effort to end hunger in Boulder and Broomfield Counties. Serving the community for 35 years, Community Food Share distributes more than 9 million meals annually. Food is distributed through a network of more than 40 partner agencies (food pantries, shelters, soup kitchens, and meal programs) and through several onsite distribution programs. To learn more, please visit [www.communityfoodshare.org](http://www.communityfoodshare.org).

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