When Amanda first stepped foot inside a food pantry, her feelings of relief were stifled by a looming sense of defeat.

The relief was easy enough to understand. With her shopping cart full, Amanda no longer needed to worry about what her family would eat that week. The defeat, however, was more complicated. It spun from the chorus of voices in her head telling her that she shouldn’t need to get assistance, that asking for help was a sign of weakness and a submission to failure. She was never meant to be in this place, they said. But those voices never belonged to her.

Around eight or nine years ago, Amanda made a decision that moved her life in a new direction. She left her abusive partner, with whom she had two young girls, and set out to make a better life for herself. She juggled various jobs to make ends meet, but she didn’t always earn enough to pay the bills. Amanda swallowed her pride, visited Sister Carmen’s food pantry, and eventually found her way to Community Food Share. “Balancing making money and being with my children — childcare costs so much — I had to get creative,” Amanda recalled.

She was working at a preschool in February 2020 when Amanda fell ill with COVID. She ended up in the hospital, learning that she had an underlying health condition that exacerbated her experience with the virus. By the time she recovered, the world around her had shut down — and she suddenly found herself without a job.

Determined to make the best of the situation, Amanda pursued an online graduate degree program. She secured a special scholarship that supports survivors of domestic violence and worked tirelessly to graduate in two years. After passing a board exam, her new degree and impressive credentials allowed her to land her dream job.

With higher pay than she ever had before, Amanda was able to build her savings and purchased a Habitat for Humanity home in North Boulder. She stopped visiting food pantries or utilizing any other human services. “I thought to myself, I finally made it,” Amanda remembered with a chuckle. But life had other plans for her.

(continued on page 4)
As I write to you, there are numerous economic reports to pore over: an 8% increase in food prices one month, record-high gas prices the next. I’ve been studying each one, trying to determine how our food bank can best serve our neighbors facing hardship while keeping an eye on the increased cost of operations. I hope by the time you read this that our economy is rebounding, and people are feeling secure. But I know that even with an improved economy, thousands of our neighbors are still struggling to make ends meet.

For families earning modest wages, even small increases in basic expenses have the potential to take a household from being self-sufficient to being on the brink of hunger in a matter of weeks. This is especially true in our community, where housing costs can quickly cannibalize a hard-earned paycheck. In fact, Boulder and Broomfield Counties are the most expensive places to live in our state — with housing costs ranging from 20 to 30% higher than the national average.

As a participant recently shared with us in a note: lately, eating healthy has been breaking the bank. While inflation has impacted people and businesses at all levels, the people who have been impacted the most are those we serve. In times like this, every dollar makes a difference. Your gift to Community Food Share helps families, seniors, and individuals in our community get the fresh, healthy food they deserve.

With gratitude,

Kim Da Silva
CEO

Volunteer Spotlight

Maria Del Carmen Villafana

Maria first learned about Community Food Share from a friend. She began visiting to our Feeding Families onsite pantry to get food for her family, and quickly became interested in how she could help. “Vine a inscribirme y mientras me inscribía tenía la curiosidad por saber qué se sentía estar adentro ayudando, hacer algo por alguien que también está haciendo algo para mí,” she shared. Maria now comes in every week to help welcome shoppers into our pantry and says each shift fills her with energy and makes her happy. We’re so grateful to have Maria’s warm, uplifting presence at Feeding Families. ¡Gracias, María!
Growing for Good

One core value has driven Rich Andrews for his entire career: the health of our planet is worth fighting for.

As a kid, he didn’t think of his family’s farm in eastern Kansas as much more than a beautiful playground. But as he got older and pursued a career in chemical engineering, agriculture became a key component of his life’s work. After traveling the world and learning about innovative farming technologies, he founded his own company that would eventually work with NASA to grow plants in space. After sharing that detail, he chuckled. "I know it sounds crazy, but it's true," he said.

After spending decades working on scientific research related to agriculture, Rich had the opportunity to buy a farm of his own after helping his mother sell their farm back in Kansas. In 2007, Rich and his wife, Elaine, purchased seven-acre property in Boulder. They began operating their own CSA that allowed families to work on the farm in exchange for their own share of organic produce each week. A firm believer in organic farming, Rich feels strongly that everyone deserves access to organic food, no matter how much money they may or may not have.

That’s why, when he heard about Community Food Share’s need for land to farm this summer, the only question he had was: “Why not?” He and his family ended their CSA program a few years ago, leaving more than 30,000 square feet available to farm, with the opportunity to expand in the coming years. Now, Community Food Share can grow thousands of pounds of fresh, organic produce thanks to the generosity of Andrews’ Family Farm.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED WITH GARDEN SHARE

Three easy ways you can help support our Garden Share program this summer:

1. **Grow a Row**
   - Donate your extra fruits and veggies to our food bank.

2. **Volunteer**
   - Get your hands dirty while making a positive impact.

3. **Make a Gift**
   - All donations help get fresh, healthy food out to our neighbors.

Thank you to our Garden Share partners!
Andrews’ Family Farm | Boulder Public Library | Community United Church of Christ
Learn more at communityfoodshare.org/garden
Battling the Stigma Within (Continued)

Amanda still felt sick more than a year after first catching the coronavirus and learning about her underlying conditions. She began working closely with her doctor, and together they discovered that COVID made permanent changes to her body and health. “I learned that my body couldn’t handle it all,” she shared. Her health continued to decline, and the small business she worked for couldn’t afford to give her the sick leave she needed. Eventually, she was let go. “I really felt I had done everything I could,” Amanda recalled. “But getting physically ill was something I couldn’t ignore. I worked myself into physically being unwell.”

Looking to make the most of every penny she had, Amanda decided to return to Community Food Share’s onsite pantry. Now she picks up groceries for herself and her daughters each week, visiting the grocery store only to supplement what she can’t find at the pantry.

“This time coming back, I thought, ‘I’m so thankful I have this help.’ It’s a different way of living, but it’s still helping me survive. I felt like I didn’t have to be ashamed,” Amanda reflected. Now, she shares her experience with friends and family members whenever they face similar struggles, letting them know there’s no reason to be ashamed by asking for help.

If you or someone you know needs help getting groceries, please visit communityfoodshare.org to see how we can help. Everyone deserves access to food — no matter what.

This person’s name has been changed to protect their privacy.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**AUG 20**

**Farm to Fork**

Join us for a celebration of local farms, craft beverages, and culinary delights from our area’s finest chefs, all set against the backdrop of the stunning Flatirons.

**SEP 2**

**Tee Up! Against Hunger Golf Tournament**

Join us for a scramble format tournament at Coal Creek Golf Course in Louisville. Register to play or become a sponsor.

**SEP 1–30**

**Hunger Action Month**

This September, choose to stand against hunger. Spreading the word, volunteering, pledging, fundraising, and donating are just a few ways to help end hunger for good.

Visit communityfoodshare.org/events for more details.