Karen has always been a go-getter. She started her first business — a pet store called Karen’s Kritters — when she was just 18 years old. She juggled entrepreneurship and restaurant work for years before being promoted to her biggest job yet: motherhood.

Never one to do things halfway, Karen poured everything into being an excellent mother to her daughter, Brooke. Brooke’s father passed away from a heart attack when she was only six years old. As she and Karen navigated their loss, their bond as mother and daughter grew stronger.

Karen started noticing something strange not long after. Suddenly, the fire that fueled so many of her endeavors was fading out. Her once abundant energy was so depleted that she couldn’t walk across the room without having to catch her breath. Her brain became foggy, her eyes jaundiced, and her body was fragile.

She was diagnosed with liver failure. “My mom had liver failure in 2011. We found out it was hereditary,” Karen explained.

Soon after, Karen became too sick to continue working in restaurants and was served an eviction notice. At the same time, her mother arrived in Colorado with a single suitcase full of clothes after fleeing an abusive relationship. Together, Karen, Brooke, and Sue suddenly became homeless.

“[Karen] felt the weight of the world then,” Karen said through tears. She felt a tremendous responsibility to do right by Brooke, and together with her mom, they slept in churches and hotel rooms until they eventually got an affordable housing unit in Boulder.

Once Karen was put on the liver transplant list, she only had to wait 20 days for the procedure — a testament to how dire her circumstances were. Within hours, she could feel her body begin to heal itself.

With her health heading in a new direction, she was ready to return to work. But with her savings depleted, she turned to Community Food Share for help with groceries. “It’s a great way to save money,” Karen noted. “There are a ton of good options out there.”

Karen and Brooke have settled into a new home in North Boulder, and her mom has her own affordable housing unit in Nederland. Back to her old self, Karen is working four jobs, including launching a tourism business called Karen’s Tour Company and starting an Amazon store. She still shops at Community Food Share when she needs a little extra help. Reflecting on her experience, Karen shared, “A lot of people struggle, and you never know their story.”

Brooke, Karen, and Sue are grateful that, thanks to Community Food Share, they don’t have to worry about missing a meal.
Did you know that gratitude has the power to rewire our brains?

It’s true! Neuroscientists have discovered that the practice of regularly expressing gratitude can lead to a variety of positive health outcomes, ranging from improved mood to better sleep.

Understanding the benefits of practicing gratitude has changed the way I see my work. When I walk through the doors each day and see our volunteers, I feel grateful that so many people choose to spend their time helping others. When I sit in meetings with my staff, I appreciate the passion, knowledge, and empathy they bring to our mission. And when I open the mail and go through donations from our community, I’m in awe of the generosity of our neighbors.

I’m not one to get caught up in the doom and gloom, which isn’t always easy. And as we look to the year ahead, conversations of recession, ongoing supply chain issues, and ever-shifting political climates make it hard for our neighbors to know what they can count on.

Through it all, I know that behind every scary headline, disgruntled driver, or feeling of defeat, there is someone fighting to make the world a better place. As you explore worthy causes to support this holiday season, know that your gift to Community Food Share will not only put food on the table, but it will also give someone in our community a little something extra to feel grateful for this season.

From our family to yours, happy holidays!

Kim Da Silva
CEO

Volunteer Spotlight

Doing More, Together

If the pandemic taught us anything, it is that no matter what challenges we face we show up and support our neighbors. We’ve been through a lot. The Marshall Fire devastated our community. Inflation skyrocketed, increasing every household’s expenses. Despite it all, Community Food Share continued to support our network of partners while sustaining our direct-distribution programs throughout Boulder and Broomfield Counties. Learn more about impact your support made in our 2022 Annual Report. Visit communityfoodshare.org for more details.
For many, the holidays can be a tough time of year. Combine the cost of travel, extravagant meals, and gifts, and you might be surprised just how much it adds up. Consider skipping the sales rack and trying an alternative gift option this year — not only would it be better for your wallet, but it’s better for the planet, too.

**GIFT A SERVICE**
Remember the good ole days when it was still appropriate to give your mom an I.O.U? It’s not entirely out of the cards yet! Try gifting an act of service to those you love. You can offer to babysit for your stressed-out sister, build a garden bed for your childhood friend, or offer your parents help around the house. Not only will they appreciate the extra help, but they’ll also be grateful for your thoughtfulness.

**GET CREATIVE!**
Some of the most memorable gifts are often the ones that are created, not purchased. Whether your skillset includes whipping up treats in the kitchen, slinging pottery in the studio, or doodling pet portraits in the park, there’s likely an inventive spin you could take with your gifts. If you’re not the creative type, try commissioning a personal piece from a local artist instead!

**GIVE A GIFT THAT GIVES BACK**
For those who are fortunate enough to have everything they need and more, consider giving a gift that benefits our community. You can send your friends and family an eCard for any occasion by making an honorary gift to Community Food Share. Or consider making your gift an experience by signing up to volunteer together!
THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT
How Boulder and Broomfield County’s Youth are Fighting Hunger

YOUTH BOARD

Last year, Jack and Nate, then juniors, came to Community Food Share with an idea: create a teen board. Today, the Youth Board gets students active in community leadership. Members help support our programs, gain leadership and fundraising experience, and serve as ambassadors in their schools and communities. To date, the Youth Board has raised over $12,000 and completed 664 hours of community service. Now seniors, Jack and Nate are working to get even more students involved in the fight against hunger.

RoughRiders Sports Club

The RoughRiders Sports Club’s foundation rests on six core values: respect, integrity, desire, excellence, relentlessness, and support. It is precisely why Doug Smail brings his hockey players to volunteer at Farm to Fork each year.

“T encouraging our boys to take part with organizations that live what they stand for,” said Doug. From it’s inception, the RoughRiders have volunteered at the event, and we couldn’t imagine it without them!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Louisville Turkey Trot

The Louisville Turkey Trot is happening this Thanksgiving. By participating, you are helping get fresh, healthy groceries to our neighbors facing hunger. Not a runner? Consider volunteering or donating!

Colorado Gives Day

Join the statewide movement that celebrates philanthropy in Colorado. Visit coloradogives.org/communityfoodshare to schedule your gift today.

Visit communityfoodshare.org/events for more details.

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