

PRESS RELEASE

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Community Combating COVID-19

Westminster, CO – As schools in the Denver Metro area announced they were closing the operations of public schools to combat the spread of COVID-19, Karen Fox Elwell, President and CEO of Growing Home, also had a big decision to make: should Growing Home close its doors for the pandemic? Knowing that if they did, they would be taking away the basic needs support they provide to their community.

Other food distributors had started to suspend operations not only because of fears relating to spreading and contracting the virus, but also not having access to enough resources to fill the increased demand for their services. After establishing procedures to ensure sanitary working conditions, Growing Home needed to figure out if they had the supplies to address the needs of their community, particularly in their food pantry. At first, it seemed that they couldn't.

"I walked into our food pantry the Monday after the closures were announced and just saw a lot of empty shelves. I thought, 'We'll be lucky to make it through the week.'" Elwell said.

But then they got a call from Food Bank of the Rockies. They were narrowing down a list of essential partners that would be chosen not only to continue receiving food throughout the pandemic, but to receive even greater quantities of food. Growing Home was one of these organizations. With these extra resources secured, the only problem left was deciding if Growing Home had the capacity to receive and distribute these resources.

"At this point we knew we would have the supplies to continue operating our food pantry, but I knew we couldn't do it alone." Elwell said.

So, Karen began reaching out to some of the organization's closest partners: The City of Westminster, Adams County government and Tri-County Health to see what, if any, resources they could provide. Much to their surprise and delight, their partners were all in to help. They offered help in the form of supplies like signage and cones for the new drive-thru food pantry as well as manpower by way of their employees.

Many of those who are employed by the city and county governments are no longer able to work in light of the pandemic, so the City of Westminster and the Adams County Government are offering to pay their employees when they come help in Growing Home's food pantry. This help has been essential in keeping operations going, considering that Growing Home's food pantry has seen anywhere from a three to seven times daily increase in traffic since the start of the pandemic.

Since the announcement of the school closures and the stay at home orders, Growing Home has seen an outpouring of support from the community. This has been seen by individuals who want to donate and volunteer, by government entities sending their employees, by other nonprofits providing additional resources and by businesses that want to donate supplies. All of this serves as a reminder of the importance and presence of community, especially in trying times.

"City staff and volunteers from areas throughout Westminster have joined to support the added challenges presented to Growing Home, to help make sure we can meet the demand for food during the COVID-19 crisis," said Parks, Recreation and Libraries Director Jason Genck.

Growing Home strives to strengthen families, nurture children and connect community. Because of the help they are receiving from others, Growing Home is able to continue fulfilling those three areas of their mission. Growing Home is as committed as ever to providing services to those in need so that families have food on the table, a place to call home and the opportunities to pursue their dreams.

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Serving the Westminster and Adams County area for over 20 years, Growing Home is a nonprofit organization that works to break the cycle of poverty by strengthening families, nurturing children, and connecting community. Each year Growing Home helps over 2,000 families using a participant-centered approach that addresses the needs of the whole person, whole family and whole community to achieve sustainable outcomes. For more information on Growing Home's mission and programs, visit www.growinghome.org.