



Colorado State University

2021

ANNUAL REPORT

Colorado State University Western Campus
COMMUNITY ALLIANCE FOR EDUCATION AND HUNGER RELIEF



Celebrating our 5th Season

~420,000
pounds

Fresh produce
distributed to the community

12,000+
hours

Hands-on K-12 Learning
at the Western Campus

19

Post-secondary interns
CSU, AmeriCorps, Workforce Development,
Colorado Mesa University

3,500+
hours

Volunteer Contributions
planting, harvesting, educating

About

The Community Alliance for Education and Hunger Relief is a service and education program of Colorado State University in Mesa County, Colorado. The program is multi-faceted, with a mission of “working together, we increase access to, knowledge of, and joy around fresh, nutritious foods so people can build healthier lives.”

We are sharing this year's report through the perspective of the Community Alliance interns who do all the hard work



Farm-to-Foodbank



'21 Vegetable Production Interns, Tori Johnson and Taylor Mayeda
Photo credit: Jeremy Poland

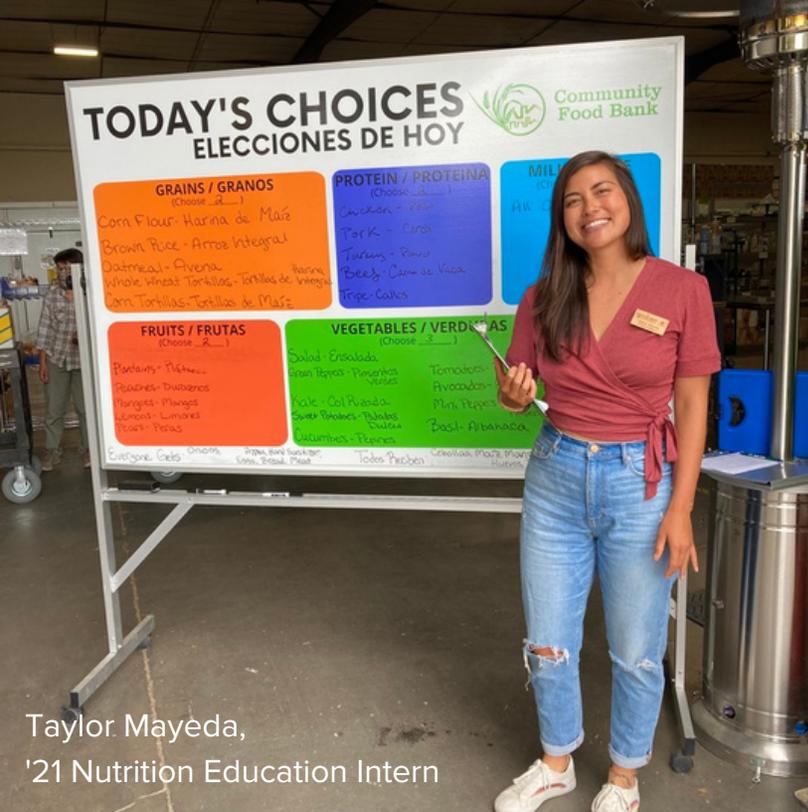
-- It is so rewarding to help provide people of all ages outdoor education and fresh, local food. --
Tori Johnson, '21 Farm-to-Food Coordinator

The Farm-to-Foodbank program is the center of our service and education programming. Through it, we provide hands-on training to interns seeking experience in small-scale vegetable production. Our 2021 interns, Tori and Taylor, led all steps of production - from seed to delivery. By the end of the year, they were an autonomously working team that led other interns and volunteers and were empowered to make decisions about this and next year's production systems. The growth in their skills and critical thinking is amazing.

Due to their hard work and commitment, this season we directed over 70,000 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables to food pantries, food banks, emergency meal programs and nutrition education programs across 14 counties on the Western Slope. We are grateful for the support of FOOD BANK OF THE ROCKIES who help make this possible.

We are proud of the impact our farm-to-foodbank program has in increasing the amount of nutritious food available to people experiencing food insecurity. As the following pages show, this program also allows us to provide food, educational spaces, and community connections to support other applied learning internships towards careers in agricultural education, nutrition, public health, and dietetics.





Taylor Mayeda,
'21 Nutrition Education Intern



Nutrition Exploration Program at CFB

Community-Based Nutrition Education

In the Food Pantry

Taylor not only grew the produce but also worked on the consumer side to build programming that encourages the selection and use of healthy foods. Under the guidance of CSU Extension Agent, Ann Duncan, M.S R.D, Taylor applied best practices from the scientific literature that are shown to change behaviors towards healthy foods. Taylor helped our partner, the Community Food Bank (CFB), convert to a full choice pantry and integrated healthy food choice "nudges" into food bank operations. Ann and Taylor designed and implemented educational programming aimed at exposing people to new foods and preparations.

This program is an example of how we co-create programming with our partners to respond to community needs. CSU staff provided the scientific rigor, and CFB provided the real-life application in how to provide nutrition education in a way that meets people where they are in life. This partnership will continue in 2022 with our new shared intern, Grace Sonderman. Grace will continue to help CFB build its "Nutrition Exploration" program while creating a CSU toolkit so that other food pantries can adopt similar practices.



Community Food Bank



AmeriCorps



**TRI-RIVER AREA
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION**

Community-Based Nutrition Education

At Western Campus

We were pleased to act as preceptors for Jenny Lange in the completion of her community dietetic internship for her masters degree from CSU. Jenny helped develop and catalog our nutrition education curriculum, which focuses on exposing students to fresh produce and building their knowledge and confidence in eating healthy. We use these lessons during field trips to the Western Campus. Students start the visit in the vegetable production fields, orchards, or service learning garden learning about food production. They bring the harvest into the 30-seat teaching kitchen to eat and learn.

With Community Partners

We are proud to support other community partners that are teaching nutrition education and supporting healthy lifestyles. We celebrated our 5th year of partnership with the Western Colorado Pediatric Associates WE CAN! Mesa County program. This program supports English and Spanish-speaking families in developing healthy habits. We provide families produce every week and host a harvest and cooking evening at the Western Campus every month during the growing season.

We are also proud to support COOKING MATTERS program. Families participating in Cooking Matters programming through Community Hospital and Hope of the Grand Valley receive produce every week throughout the growing season. This extends the learning by giving them the ingredients to try out the lessons and recipes at home.

We are thankful of the support from Grand Junction ROTARY which donated \$250 to support our nutrition programming at Western Campus.



Jenny Lange, MS RD '22 with students

-- I combined and applied my knowledge of curriculum development with nutrition education, while deepening my connection to community. -- Jenny Lange, '22 CSU Coordinated Masters Program in Dietetics



**FOOD SCIENCE AND
HUMAN NUTRITION**
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY



**COOKING
MATTERS®**



SD51 student harvesting for her school cafeteria



SD51 students making snacks from their harvest

Agricultural Education

Farm-to-School Programming

We engaged 687 K-12 students in over 4,000 hours of learning at the Western Campus through school-based field trips, after-school programming, and science day camps. We use the vegetable fields, orchards, forest, and service-learning gardens at the Orchard Mesa Research Station at the Western Campus as outdoor learning spaces. During 42 visits from spring until late fall, students learn about agriculture, life sciences, environmental stewardship and nutrition. Students experience the importance of service by sharing produce they harvest with their school cafeterias and food pantries.

Learning at Western Campus

In partnership with colleagues from Extension, Department of Agricultural Biology and Western Slope Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, students explored the broader world of agriculture. Over the course of a week, students learned in-depth the impact of microbes on plant, animal and human health with the help of our CSU partners at the Western Campus.

Support of Problem-Based Learning

Through field trips, presentations, and panels we supported 7 schools in the completion of the problem-based learning around topics of food, water, health, and agricultural systems.



AGRICULTURAL
EXPERIMENT STATION
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY



TRI-RIVER AREA
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



D51 STEM
MORE QUESTIONS.
MORE CONNECTIONS.



Riverside Educational Center
After School Tutoring and Enrichment



Community Food Systems

The Mesa County Blueprint to End Hunger was released in May 2021 to define actionable steps to ensure Mesa County residents have access to nutritious foods. This plan prioritizes understanding the needs of people experiencing hunger. One of the ways the Blueprint implementation team is assessing these needs is by surveying people at food pantries.

Rachel Seidner, a Masters candidate from Colorado School of Public Health, surveyed 623 patrons of food pantries to understand what foods they need and prefer, if there are any foods they can't easily acquire from food pantries, and what barriers make it hard to use the food. Rachel was supported by the CSU Extension internship program and funding from the Mesa County Blueprint Implementation grant.

Overall, the survey indicated Mesa County is doing a good job meeting most people's needs. From the results, we recommend food pantries prioritize fresh foods (meat, produce and dairy) as it is most preferred by patrons and best meets cultural needs and dietary restrictions. We recommend food pantries be more geographically spread out, as location is the primary reason people pick food pantries. Finally, we determined that some patrons are unable to cook some of the food because they lack of other ingredients, such as oil and spices. This finding lends itself to a focused community fundraising campaign to purchase these items for food pantries. Rachel is continuing this work in the '21-'22 school year through her practicum and capstone to disseminate the information to the community, especially to the community members who took the survey.

-- The most influential part of this internship was talking to food pantry clients and listening to their stories. The value of storytelling is too often overlooked in research. --

Rachel Seidner, '21 Extension Intern



Rachel Seidner, 2021 Extension Intern



**ENGAGEMENT
AND EXTENSION**
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

colorado school of
public health

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO



MESA COUNTY BLUEPRINT
TO END HUNGER

Investing in Sustainability



Free time play during a EUREKA summer daycamp

BACON
Family
Foundation



New Field, New Approach

At the end of 2021, we committed ourselves to a new approach in vegetable production. We have a new 3 1/2 acre field, divided into four sections. Our vegetable fields will be rotated every year with cover crops in order to rebuild soils, increase fertility, reduce weed pressure and use our water wisely. We are integrating an experimental no-till section and have ambitious plans for perennial borders that attract pollinators and create healthy microclimates for crops. Integrating these systems into one physical space will allow us to better demonstrate sustainable practices to students, visitors and volunteers. Our AmeriCorps intern, Tori Johnson, is so committed and passionate in helping to lead this change, she returned to lead our 2022 season.

Dedicated Classroom for K-12 Learning

We learned this year that the demand for hands-on learning at Western Campus is outstripping the capacity of our facilities and personnel. To grow our farm-to-school programming in a sustainable way, we are expanding our partnership with the EUREKA! McConnell Science Museum and remodeling our old conference into a student-friendly learning space. We thank the incredible generosity of the Bacon Family Foundation and Western Colorado Community Foundation in supporting the remodel.

Fundraising Campaign

If you are inclined to financially support our investments in growing and sustaining our programs, please contact Amanda at amanda.mcquade@colostate.edu.

Our Volunteers

Our dedicated volunteers gave their mornings, weeknights, and weekends to harvest over 25,000 pounds of our total harvest, small buckets at a time. We had 190 unique volunteers give 744 hours during 49 separate volunteer events. We are so thankful for their contribution to our program and community and our work wouldn't be as rewarding without them.

Our Staff

Tremendous thank you to our staff at our Orchard Mesa Research Station, especially Emily Dowdy and Jeff Pieper for all their help, support, and guidance.

Our lives are better and this program richer due to the contributions of our colleagues at the all three stations of the Western Colorado Research Center, Tri River Extension, Western Regional Extension, Colorado State Forest Service, and Western Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory.

A special thank you to our newly retired station manager, Greg Litus, whose vision of this program, tireless advocacy and hard work are the reasons why this program has celebrated its 5th growing season.

Contact Us

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Photo credit: Jeremy Poland