



LEAVE YOUR MARK...

WESTERN COLORADO COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Charitable Funds for Community Good

Grant Funding Available

*New online application
process open, funds
available for community
food and hunger relief
projects*

In support of our ongoing work on child hunger and building on the new Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger, our Community Foundation's theme for grants this year is hunger relief.

Grants in the size of \$2,500 to \$10,000 are available for nonprofit organizations working to expand hunger relief efforts (especially for children during summer months and for seniors), increase food recovery/reduce food waste, and increase access to healthy foods across the seven counties we serve. Projects that involve collaboration between two or more hunger relief organizations are encouraged.

The deadline for application is July 15th. For more information and to apply, visit: wccf.org/nonprofits/grantmaking

Community Leaders Weigh In



Leadership Forum on Hunger *Food insecurity and its impacts on our community*

On June 1st, our Community Foundation hosted a special gathering of business, government, health care, education, social services and other community leaders to learn about the new Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger, an initiative of the Colorado Health Foundation. 65 leaders attended. Front and center were statistics about the prevalence of hunger in Mesa County and the inter-relatedness between hunger and a number of quality of life factors, from health issues (prevalence of diabetes and obesity) to educational attainment, to impacts on self esteem, rates of depression and suicide.

The Leadership Forum was designed to showcase some of the innovative projects addressing hunger in Mesa County, including the Lunch Lizard summer mobile meals program, the Kids Aid backpack program and the Community Alliance which grows thousands of pounds of fresh produce for community food banks. Most important, leaders were challenged to identify new solutions and resources to help local hunger relief organizations expand. As an example, could more institutions and restaurants follow

Ending hunger in our communities

Robin Brown, Grand Junction Economic Partnership:
"Child hunger is real in our community. Almost one in two children in our school district qualify for free or reduced lunch. I see child hunger not just as a basic need, but as an economic development issue for our community."

Vara Kusel, Horizon Drive Business District: *"This problem can be solved using technology, coordination, collaboration and community resources!"*

Lisa Fenton-Free, Rocky Mountain Health Foundation:
"Our health foundation will absolutely engage in these efforts and promote the issue of hunger relief as a key focus for the western slope."

Mike Sewell, WCCF Board chairman: *"I'm alarmed at the connection between food insecurity and higher rates of teenage suicide. Clearly this is something we need to address in our community."*

Dan Prinster, St. Mary's Hospital: *"Thank you for sponsoring such a timely and important forum. I was impressed with the information and presenters, and the strong response the forum elicited."*

the lead of Sodexo at Colorado Mesa University to "recover" unserved food and deliver it to organizations serving the hungry. Sodexo recovers approximately 1,100 pounds of food each month for Karis-The House, Catholic Outreach and HomewardBound that would otherwise be thrown in the trash.

A big THANK YOU to Colorado Health Foundation Senior Policy Officer, Alexis Weightman, and Jennifer Banyan, consultant and author of the [Blueprint](#), for their help designing the session and being with our community for this important conversation.

In the coming months, our Community Foundation will be taking the lead on organizing concrete action steps and convening people interested in various activities. Stay tuned and please join us in our community-wide efforts to end hunger.

Read the *Daily Sentinel* coverage of the Leadership Forum [here](#).

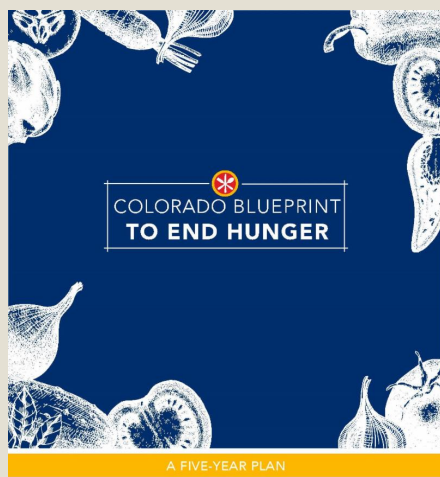
Read the *Daily Sentinel* Editorial "Let's End Hunger" [here](#).

Read WCCF's Letter to the Editor [here](#).



Kevin Simperts, Marketing Coordinator at Sodexo Dining Services at Colorado Mesa University, talks about their food recovery efforts at the Mesa County Leadership Forum on Hunger.

[Mesa County](#)
[Blueprint to End Hunger](#)
*Identifying next steps and
developing a local action plan*



[Learn more about food insecurity](#)

Interested in learning more about hunger in our state? Download the [Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger](#) here.

Want to get involved in our efforts to end hunger in Mesa County? Please visit our website wc-cf.org and sign up for email updates.



[New Endowment Established](#)

Mike and Debbie Berry Fund to Support Kids Aid Backpack Program

In mid June, Mike Berry, founder of Kids Aid, and his wife were celebrated at a family and fan-filled party in honor of Mike's retirement from the Kids Aid board after ten years of service. The Kids Aid board surprised the Berrys by announcing that an endowment fund has been established at our Community Foundation in their name: *the **Mike and Debbie Berry Fund for Kids***

Following on the great interest and ideas generated at our Leadership Forum, our Community Foundation will be pulling together some action steps for the next six to nine months, organizing and encouraging a number of specific projects that address the goals and action steps in the statewide plan and that will have the most impact for us here in Mesa County. More specifically, we will be convening work groups and facilitating processes for the following:

Fostering greater collaboration and support for our local hunger relief organizations so they can achieve operating efficiencies and capture more resources to expand services.

Increasing food recovery efforts, saving unused food from being thrown in the trash and providing food for hunger relief. Kudos to St. Mary's Hospital, Horizon Drive Business District and D51 Food and Nutrition Services for stepping up to explore food recovery options in their organizations.

Increasing enrollment in food assistance programs. Colorado ranks 45th in the country for enrollment in SNAP, formerly known as food stamps. Increasing enrollment for those who are eligible for federal assistance not only directly benefits hungry families, but has economic spillover effects. For every \$1 issued in food stamp benefits, \$1.70 is generated in economic activity, boosting western Colorado's economy.

Some of the other ideas that came out of the Leadership Forum:

Purchasing and sharing ***specialized delivery trucks for hunger relief*** (flatbed trucks, refrigerated trailers) to improve the overall delivery system.

Exploring a ***just-in-time cell phone app and delivery system*** to move surplus food from where it is (grocery stores, dining institutions, restaurants) to where it is needed across the community.

Launching a community-wide ***teacher snack program***. Currently, many teachers purchase snacks with their own money to make sure children are not hungry and are able to better learn in the classroom.

Aid. Several anonymous Community Foundation donors have made generous donations to the new endowment - seeing this as a fitting and appropriate way to honor the legacy and contributions of Mike and Debbie to addressing child hunger in our community.



Representatives from State of Colorado Education and Ag departments in Grand Junction for summer meals kick-off

Lunch Lizard launches 4th summer season

Each year, the Colorado Dept. of Education (CDE) and the US Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) selects one location in the State of Colorado that has been engaged in innovative work to serve meals to children in the summer months. Mesa County and our D51 Lunch Lizard program was selected this summer. The Summer Meals Kick-Off Event was held on June 1st in Lincoln Park. The park was teeming with booths providing families with information on summer activities for kids and resources for families.

Ashley Moen, Summer Meals Program Supervisor for the CDE, noted, "This was one of the best kick-off events we've attended. The turnout from the community speaks to the amazing partnerships you've created in order to

Reflections from the Executive Director

I had the privilege of attending a surprise retirement party for Mike Berry on June 14th. A small and intimate affair, out-of-town family and friends paid tribute to a man they knew well and clearly loved. The principal from a school where Kids Aid started over ten years ago spoke about meeting someone at a farmer's market in a small town in Oregon who knew about Kids Aid and had started a backpack program in her community. Mike's idea for a program to feed hungry kids had spread that far.

Mike's wife Debbie talked about the day Mike walked their daughter to school and met a little girl crying on a swing because she was hungry... the moment the commitment to "do something" that would become Kids Aid took root in Mike Berry's heart. I've heard that story before, but what I learned for the first time was that the reason Mike walked his daughter to school that day was because he wasn't working, he was being treated for an aggressive cancer. As Debbie put it, Mike was struggling with something big and awful that wasn't his fault. Just as the hungry child was struggling with something big and awful that wasn't her fault. Two people struggling with difficult circumstances beyond their control - one with a basic need, one with a need to find some meaning. In that minute of meeting, they connected and some sort of social fission of compassion started a chain reaction of care and empathy organizing into the Kids Aid Backpack Program.

As the testimonies continued with important people in his life remembering him and shining a spotlight on his qualities and accomplishments, Mike joked that the event felt like he was attending his own funeral. Mike is not gone from us, not yet. He may be retiring (don't hold your breath on that one) from the Kids Aid board of directors and a leadership position in the organization he founded, but he will be around... driving the forklift in the warehouse, moving pallets of peanut butter into position for the countless volunteers to pack emergency food provisions for some 2,200 school age children each weekend - fulfilling Kids Aid's mission to provide emergency food for weekends so

expand summer meals for kids."



The Western Colorado Community Foundation is confirmed in compliance with National Standards for U.S. Community Foundations by the Council on Foundations.

children in our school district are "only hungry to learn."

As someone who has also been diagnosed with cancer and been on her own survival journey the past 18 months, I totally resonate to Mike's commitment to make a difference. We all have limited time on this earth. Those of us blessed with gifts are invited to join in the plans and action steps taking shape to end hunger in Mesa County and across western Colorado. Give back, get involved. May we all be "only hungry to live."

-- Anne Wenzel

[Visit our Website](#)

