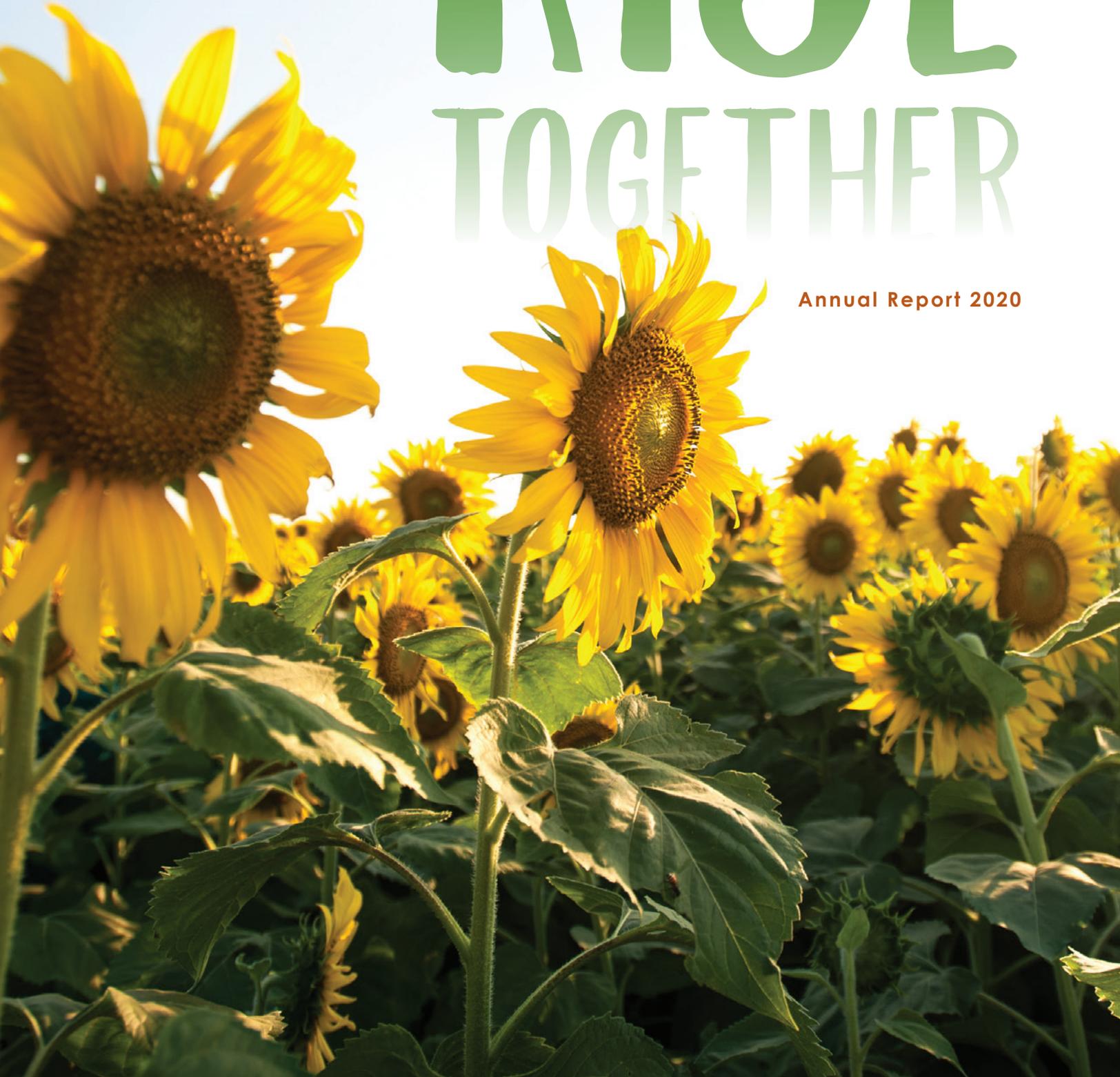




# RISE TOGETHER

Annual Report 2020



**METRO CARING'S MISSION** is to work with our community to meet people's immediate need for nutritious food while also building a movement to address the root causes of hunger. Metro Caring sees our community of more than 75,000 Coloradans as a base from which to build an anti-hunger movement.

Coloradans do not go hungry because of a lack of food. Coloradans go hungry because they don't have enough money to put food on the table. We must tackle the need for a living wage, the racial wealth gap, and fight for an economy where anyone who works hard can provide for themselves and their family.

We recognize our community as our base for a powerful movement for change. Our approach is unique because we don't assume what our community needs. Instead, we listen to the needs and desires the community itself defines, bringing resources to the table to solve problems hand-in-hand with our participants.

When we began our work 46 years ago, it was intended as a short-term safety net for people who had fallen on hard times. Hunger today is a long-term condition for working people, and people trying to get by on social security. Hunger is a symptom of larger issues, and so over the years we've grown to add not just a focus on nutrition, but gardens and urban farming, economic development, and community organizing and activation, to confront the root causes that can lead to or contribute to Coloradans not knowing where their next meal will come from.

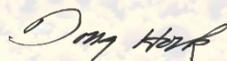
In 2018, we focused heavily on shifting from doing this work for our community to doing it with our community. The framework for everything these days is letting go of our own power and sharing it with our communities in which we work. This last year, we doubled down on our previous investment by intentionally co-creating strategies with our community members.

**People are the experts on their own lives, and given the right support, tools, and encouragement, they have new and intelligent ideas about how to improve them.**

When the community members share in the work, their connection to food and health, to each other, and to Metro Caring shifts. It's no longer a "we give, they take" proposition. It's collaborative—and a strong foundation to continue to build on together—with our community members leading in bold new ways.



Teva Sienicki,  
CEO



Doug Hock,  
Board President

# NUTRITIOUS FOOD CHANGES EVERYTHING

From health to education to increasing standards of living—we center food in all we do.



2,680,739  
Pounds of Food  
Distributed in 2020

## DIRECT FOOD ACCESS

At Metro Caring, we engage thousands of Coloradans each week who need healthy, nutritious food. The bottom line is if you're poor, you're expected to stand and wait in lines and take the cheap, unhealthy, processed food from the charity that offers it, and be grateful for what you've been handed. Colorado is a rich state with a surplus of food, but high levels of economic inequality create vast disparities in food access within our state.

**Food has the ability to bring people together and to challenge the barriers that divide us.**

Healthy food is a right, not a privilege. Metro Caring intentionally goes against the grain of what food access has historically looked like. We aim to be a hub for healthy, local, nourishing food and will continue to resist being a dumping ground for sugary baked goods, soda, and sweets.



11,029  
Unduplicated  
Households Served

20,136  
Identification Vouchers  
March 2019–March 2020



## VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers are central to everything we do. This organization could not function without them and our mission could not be achieved without their passion and dedication to feeding our community members. They are heavily involved in every aspect of Metro Caring from running our operations on the ground, supporting community members remotely, advocating for healthy food, and engaging individuals with the political process. We're proud to say that one in three of our community members also volunteer.



80,200  
Number of  
Volunteer Hours

# TACKLING HUNGER AT ITS ROOT

We seek to build community through food by learning, cooking, and sharing together.



**“Cocina y Nutrición (cooking club in Spanish) made me aware and conscious about the fact that if I don't change my dietary habits, I will have a short life with lots of illness.”**

## NUTRITION AND HEALTH

Our nutrition education programs help families learn new skills to take control of their health, understand healthy behaviors, and combat diet-related diseases like diabetes and heart disease. With the help of numerous community partners, Metro Caring offers health screenings, bilingual cooking classes, and diabetes prevention and self-management that all integrate foods found in the Fresh Foods Market with evidence-based educational materials.

### Diabetes Self-Management and Prevention

Graduates started a cooking club and support group for people diagnosed with diabetes, called “Cooking Healthy with Love” (*Cocinando Saludable con Amor*). They took turns leading sessions devoted to preparing tasty, nutritious recipes.

### Community Wealth Building

Ria was a community member in cooking classes, who quickly jumped into volunteering, and now facilitates the Healthy Traditions cooking club. When we learned more about her dreams and ambitions, we connected her to participate in a 12-week program for entrepreneurs through our partner, Rocky Mountain Microfinance Institute. Ria used Metro Caring's commercially licensed kitchen to launch her catering business and connected another member of her cohort, Danette, to use the kitchen to launch her chicken and waffles business as well.



87%

of Nutrition Volunteers are also Participants



### Kidz in the Kitchen

After a community circle to gather interested families for feedback and give opportunity to sign up for leadership roles, the class relaunched as a parent-led cooking club. The club occurred with Spanish translation and parents led recipe stations where other families helped prepare the food, then everyone enjoyed a meal together as a brief, fun nutrition activity occurred.

## COMMUNITY GARDENS

People have been growing food in urban areas for years. The idea of community gardens associated with our direct food access makes sense. Gardeners and visitors to Metro Caring get access to fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs, while connecting with other gardeners and community members.

Metro Caring owns a hydroponic container farm, which we call the Hydro Farm. It's an upcycled shipping container outfitted with a drip irrigation system designed to grow leafy green vegetables year-round! Metro Caring's Hydro Farm is an urban farming educational space that provides fresh, local greens to consumers of all income levels.

One of the best parts about community-driven work is seeing people put their passions to work. So when some of our community came to us with a desire to learn beekeeping, of course we said yes. We paired Ricardo, a local beekeeper and community member, with our learners and watched them thrive together. The hive provides an educational space for beginner beekeepers and a community-building space for gardeners. And, with one of every four bites of food depending on bees for pollination, we know the importance of this project in our fight against hunger. We consider our hive a free support system for local urban growers. If you have a garden within about three miles of Metro Caring, chances are you've seen our bees out doing work!

When our community shares in the work of the gardens with their own hands and are connected to the food that they grow and eat, we are adding to the foundation of our anti-hunger movement.



60 Garden Plots Managed by Individual Families in the Community



## COMMUNITY ACTIVATION

We see community building as the key to successfully ending hunger. We work with our community to prepare leaders to occupy all areas of influence that impact the anti-hunger movement. We want to shift power to the people that are most impacted by inequity in the existing food system.

Our team builds sustainable, lasting power with our community by providing high-quality training and development in leadership, community organizing, civic engagement, advocacy, media training, storytelling, and intensive speaker trainings.

As a community-based organization, Metro Caring's strength lies in bringing experts with lived experience to the table, organizing them to prioritize issues, inform policy development, testify at hearings, advocate to address root causes, and communicate with elected officials.

The Caring Voices in Action (CVA) group comprises individuals with lived experience. Now trained and empowered in leadership and systems-change work, they now set our policy priorities. This group grew out of the very first gathering for Community Activation.



# MEMBER'S STORY

**We take our cues from the needs and desires the community itself defines, bringing resources to the table to solve problems hand-in-hand with our participants.**



Eva (center) says her biggest accomplishment over the past year was getting to know her potential, saying, "I know I'm good at seeing the skills others have, but not as good at seeing my own. I'm learning! I can do these things and I can learn and grow and do better."

Eva has been busy coordinating all of our cooking classes, heading "train the trainers" classes for leaders of *Cocina y Nutrición*, organizing the diabetes cooking club, recruiting for the Diabetes Self-Management course in Spanish, as well as doing translation and interpretation of recipes and curriculum.

Eva approached Lannea after a cooking class at Metro Caring. "I want to invite people from my community to these classes," she said, "but Metro Caring doesn't offer any cooking programs in Spanish." Lannea had been working at Metro Caring for only a few months, but had noticed the same. She invited Eva to partner together to start a cooking class in Spanish. Eva graciously

said yes, and shared her skills/know-how in Spanish language, community mobilization and cultural context to redesign (not just translate) the curriculum and invite others to participate.

The first *Cocina y Nutrición* cohort launched in November 2016. Since families with children participate, childcare was identified as a need, and Metro Caring awarded a former class member a monetary stipend to provide childcare. One mom said: "Having a person from within our community care for my children is really important to me," adding, "I trust the care they are getting." The class follows a "train the trainer" format in which community members participate, and some are invited to lead future cohorts of the eight-week class. Rosa and Ivonne are two community leaders who now work closely with Eva to lead nutrition activities, facilitate learning the recipes—as everyone cooks together and shares ideas—and help build a strong, vibrant sense of community.

**Working with our community, not for, in building an anti-hunger movement.**

**We are always asking our community members how to make our market a better reflection of the food they cook with most.**

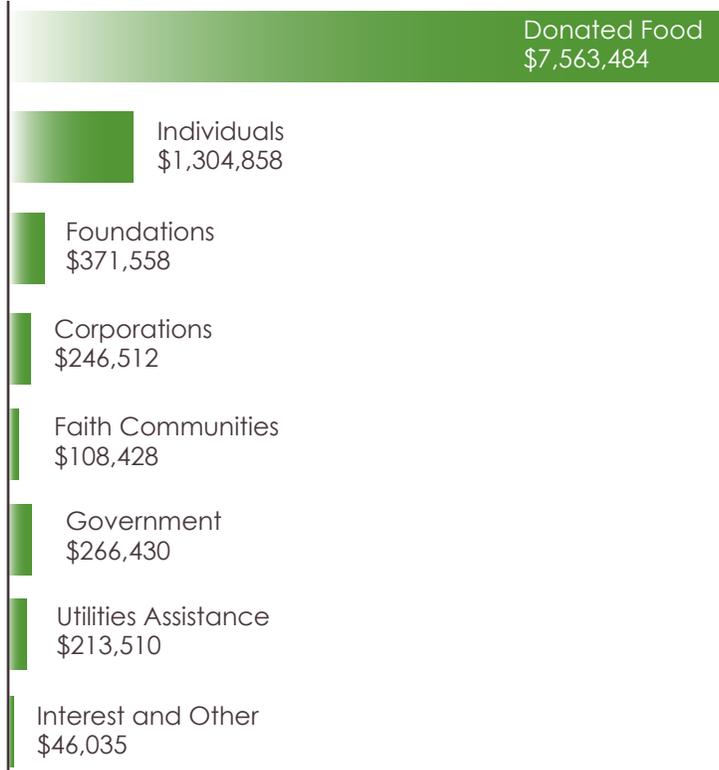


Eva also attended a five-week training with the Rocky Mountain Microfinance Institute (the precursor program to the 12-week program that Rosa and Eva attended) to begin vetting the idea of a tortilla business! Eva and Rosa, one of the community leader's Eva has trained up behind her, started making tortillas in our community kitchen for distribution.

Tortillas have always been a big request from our Latinx community. This past year we were able to meet the request for tortillas by hiring two of our community members to cook homemade tortillas in our kitchen; these are distributed in our market at no cost. We were able to pay our tortilla makers a livable wage for the high-quality product they were supplying to our market, all while meeting the request of our community.

# FINANCIALS

## INCOME



**TOTAL INCOME:** \$10,120,815

## EXPENSES



**TOTAL EXPENSES:** \$10,249,142

**TOTAL NET ASSETS:** \$5,392,401

**DECREASE IN NET ASSETS:** \$128,327

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Communications Consultant,  
Doug Hock  
Communications, LLC

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Teva Sienicki,  
CEO, Metro Caring

\*80,200 x \$29.50/hour from the Independent Sector's value of volunteer time in CO for 2019



**\$2,365,900**  
Value of 80,200  
Volunteer Hours\*

## ROOTS TO RISE SOCIETY

Roots to Rise Society members are a special group of friends that believe in Metro Caring's mission and want to ensure that we can meet people's immediate need for nutritious food for as long as needed in our community and invest in the long-term work of movement building, organizing, and advocacy to end hunger at its root.

### \$25,000+

Deborah Price

### \$10,000-\$24,999

Mike and Cheryl Porter

Becca and Robert Reichenberger

### \$1,000-\$9,999

Anonymous

Richard Abels

Judith Ackerman and Jon Brause

Spiros Antoniadis and Barbara Wells

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Colleen Barrett

Kurt Bethke

Mike and Susan Boulden

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Martha Burroughs

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Central Presbyterian Church

DC Coulon

Dominic Dezzutti

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Maria, Bilal, and Bella Hannon

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Tom and Kris Stoever

Mel Stolzenburg

David Suppes

Bob and Shirley Traettino

Jamen Tyler

James and Lisa Van Someren

Ethan and Lauren Watel

Lisa Whitesides

## FOUNDATIONS

### \$1,000+

Babies Now! Foundation

Bank of America Charitable Foundation

Change Happens Foundation

Conagra Brands Foundation

Denver Broncos Charities

Denver Post Season to Share Fund

El Pomar Foundation

Frank E. and Seba B. Payne Foundation

Louis and Dorothy Meister Foundation

McPherson Family Foundation

Mile High United Way

Natural Resources Defense Council

Posner-Wallace Foundation

Schlessman Family Foundation

The Anschutz Foundation

The Augustana Foundation

The Colorado Academy

The Denver Foundation

The Rose Community Foundation

The Swinerton Foundation

The Virginia W. Hill Foundation

Winter-Lehman Family Foundation

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

### \$2,500+

American Nurses Credentialing Center

Arnold & Porter

Big Red F Restaurant Group

Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck

City and County of Denver

Colorado Academy

D.A. Davidson & Co.

Denver Community Credit Union

FirstBank

Great Western Bank

Holman Enterprises

Justin's

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