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For The Tribune

Being homeless gave Rhonda White and her husband, Junior White, compassion for the people living at the Greeley Transitional House.

Only a few years ago, they were in the same situation as the residents at the Greeley Transitional House, 1206 10th St. They stayed there for only a few weeks, but the agency continued to help the White family years after they left.

During the spring of 2007, Junior White was laid off from his job after being injured. Soon after the layoff, the couple and their three kids, found themselves evicted from their house. The White family started looking for help and found the Greeley Transitional House.

"Everyone at the Greeley Transitional House was very supportive. I felt the warmth when I walked in the door," Rhonda White said.

The agency helped the White family find a place to live, pay for the down payment on a house, assisted with electricity bills and helped Junior White find a job. The White family stayed in the follow-up program for two years, which allowed them to get regular checkups from their case manager.

In August 2009, Junior White was laid off again. He started searching for jobs without any success. The agency stepped in to help again and offered him a job, which is his current position, doing house management and grounds keeping at the agency.

Rhonda White is involved with the agency as well, volunteering with a kids group once a week. While parents are taking classes at the agency on nutrition, parenting and life management, Rhonda White watches the children by doing crafts with them.

Since moving out of the Greeley Transitional House, workers at the agency have accepted the White family as their own.

"Both mine and Junior's parents have passed away and my siblings live out of town. I know that Junior's coworkers really care about our family...they have become our family," Rhonda White said.

The agency workers were there when the White's daughter got sick with croup and when Rhonda White had two surgeries. Each time agency workers flooded them with calls and cards.

"We provide more than a Band-Aid. We give them compassion with no judgment," said Jodi Hartmann, the executive director for the Greeley Transitional House. The Greeley Transitional House, which is one of the eight nonprofits that will benefit from the Northern Colorado Empty Stocking Fund this year, provides shelter to families with urgent needs and helps stabilize families by connecting people to resources. Families can stay with the agency for up to 60 days. So far, the Greeley Transitional House has helped more than 14,000 families. Hartmann said she believes that a huge reason they are so successful is because they assign case managers to every family.

"We feel very fortunate to receive extra funds from the Empty Stocking Fund," Hartmann said.