

Empty Stocking Fund: Greeley Transitional House makes difference for man, his daughters

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Four years ago, John Santos had two big decisions to make after being laid off.

First, would he pay his rent or acquire a storage unit for his family's belongings? Second, what would he do after that?

His choices didn't only affect him, they also affected his three daughters. Without a job and without a home, all his family needed was a little help.

Santos decided to put his things in storage and applied for help at the Greeley Transitional House.

"It was my last resort, but I didn't have anywhere else to turn to," he said.

Santos, a single parent, has had four jobs in the past four years. Finding employment has been easy with his work experience, but keeping a job during the tough economic times has been difficult.

Santos isn't alone.

"There just aren't enough jobs out there right now and stable jobs are an issue," said Jodi Hartmann, the Greeley Transitional House executive director. "It's a step-by-step process to get on your feet when you fall this far down. We systematically go through what they need to do to get back up."

Thanks in part to the help he received from The Greeley Transitional House, 1206 10th St., Santos was able to get back on his feet. He works for Greeley's street division and lives with his three daughters in their own apartment.

"He put a priority on being a parent and keeping his girls stable," Hartmann said. "He's a good parent."

The Greeley Transitional House, which has served Greeley for 26 years, provides a combination of day and night shelter with enough room to house up to 12 families at one time. Families such as Santos and his daughters receive help from crisis managers who deal with every family on a case-by-case basis. Typically, the agency helps about 90-100 families a year. The agency is one of the eight nonprofits that will benefit from the Northern Colorado Empty Stocking Fund this year.

"As much as they would offer, in return they would only ask for a little bit. I would always do that little bit for them and that's what got me back in there," Santos said. "If it wasn't for them, there's no telling where I would be today."

There are several ways to make donations to the Northern Colorado Empty Stocking Fund:

» Online: Go to www.nocoemptystocking.org

» By mail: Send contributions to P.O. Box 534, Greeley, CO 80632 or P.O. Box 588, Fort Collins, CO 80522.

About the fund

Since its founding in 2007, the Northern Colorado Empty Stocking Fund has raised more than \$330,000 to support health and human service agencies in Larimer and Weld counties. With matching funds provided from the El Pomar Foundation, every dollar grows by 33 percent. United Ways of Larimer and Weld County cover all administrative costs for the campaign, which means every dollar donated goes directly to the recipient organizations. This year's recipient agencies include: Catholic Charities of Larimer County, Catholic Charities of Weld County, Connections for Independent Living, Crossroads Ministry of Estes Park, Food Bank of Larimer County, Greeley Transitional House, House of Neighborly Service and Weld Food Bank. For more information, go to www.nocoemptystocking.org or visit the fund on Facebook by searching Northern Colorado Empty Stocking Fund.

About the Greeley Transitional House

For more about the Greeley Transitional House, call (970) 352-3215 or go to www.greeleytransitional.house.org