

Weld Food Bank makes every dollar count

By Meagan Birely
For Greeley Tribune

For every \$1 donated, the Weld Food Bank can distribute \$10 worth of nutritional food. And when the food bank gives out 8 million pounds of food a year, every dollar matters. The Weld Food Bank is one of eight agencies receiving help from the Northern Colorado Empty Stocking Fund, which provides resources for local human service agencies dedicated to helping community members struggling to meet basic needs.

The food bank has seen a decline in donations. Kevin Mullin, director of development, said they speculate that as more people need to access the bank's services, there are fewer people available to contribute, which creates a gap. The Empty Stocking Fund helps to fill that gap. "We appreciate being a part of the Empty Stocking Fund," Mullin said. "There is no shortage of worthy organizations in our community so we feel really honored and privileged to be a part of it."

The food bank partners with 104 agencies to allow people around the county access to its services without having to be in Greeley, which is where the 35,000-square-foot food bank is. On average, the bank helps 10,000 people a month, and that number does not include people who receive help from the partner agencies. The bank provides emergency food boxes, about 30,000 a year, grocery shopping for people in need, holiday meals and much more. With the food bank's new kitchen, they are also able to prepare hot meals, teach people how to cook nutritionally sound meals and will be able to provide hot meals in the event of a disaster. "We are busy throughout the year," Mullin said. "Our work is not so much seasonal because obviously people need to eat all year around."

The money from the Empty Stocking Fund will kickstart the year for the Weld Food Bank. Mullin said the money will most likely be used by the end of February. The money will be used as unrestricted dollars, which will allow the food bank to assess their needs at the time, Mullin said. "That is really beneficial for us because it allows us to make strategic decisions on what the needs are right then," Mullin said. "We do the best we can to forecast what is going to happen and what our needs are going to be but sometimes things come up that we just didn't expect. So having flexible dollars like that gives us the ability to address those problems."