Rural Hunger Presents Unique Challenges

During the month of October, we work to educate our friends about rural hunger. The overwhelming majority of the counties within our service area, 26 out of 31, are considered rural by the State Demographer’s office. This presents a unique set of challenges for our food distribution efforts. Many rural communities do not have agencies that have the capacity to distribute perishable or large quantities of food. Further, rural communities often lack adequate job opportunities, public transportation, and grocery stores, making it difficult for those with no or minimal transportation to access nutritious food.

Mobile Food Pantries are one way that we can get food to rural communities. Mobile Food Pantries make stops at set locations and distribute an average of 5,000 pounds of food at each location, including fresh produce. Last year, we received a grant from El Paso County’s Community Development Block Grant program to purchase a new Mobile Food Pantry. We also received funding from CoBank and Farm Credit of Southern Colorado specifically to purchase food for those living in rural communities. These grants helped us to reach more than 1,400 individuals, including those from female-headed households, seniors, persons with physical disabilities, from large families of 5 or more members, and/or injured soldiers or veterans.

The CraftWorks Foundation

The CraftWorks Foundation, a 501c(3), non-profit organization, is the charitable arm of CraftWorks Restaurants and Breweries, Inc., parent company of Rock Bottom Restaurant & Brewery, Old Chicago Restaurants, Gordon Biersch Brewery and Restaurant and Specialty Brands. Every CraftWorks restaurant partners with local charities to increase charitable awareness and fundraise. The Foundation is:

- Dedicated to combating hunger in the communities in which they live and operate restaurants.
- Committed to providing support through their restaurants to organizations and programs that address the social issue of hunger.

Care and Share Food Bank has benefited from the CraftWorks-sponsored Springs Beer Fest fundraiser for the last two years. The event this past August brought out nearly 4,000 attendees and raised $25,000 for our programs.

In that same spirit of giving, Old Chicago on Powers is hosting a public virtual food drive from September through December. Their staff kicked it off by sorting and packing food in our warehouse in September. This is another example of how businesses can make a powerful impact on the problem of food insecurity through third party events, food drives, employee giving and volunteering.

CraftWorks is committed to ending hunger in their community and are walking the talk in every way!
A Pueblo family tradition – Mauro Farms

The Mauro family has been farming in Pueblo for more than 70-years; managing nearly 250 acres of farm land. More than five years ago, Steve Mauro established a partnership with Care and Share to provide healthy, locally grown, nutritious produce to help us meet our goal of increasing the flow of nutritious food resources to those who are food insecure in Southern Colorado. Thank you Mauro Farms!

For three generations, the Mauro family continues to operate its farm, store, and bakery daily. They grow produce items such as cabbage, cantaloupe, cauliflower, corn, pumpkin, squash, watermelons, and the popular chilies that the Pueblo area is so well-known for.

Because of this partnership, Care and Share’s partner agencies have been able to distribute more than 382,000 pounds of fresh produce to their local communities in the past five years. So far during 2014, we have received more than 103,000 pounds and the crop/harvest cycle is not even finished for the season!

Our partnership with Mauro Farms is in continual development. Training and work on food safety and processes are being fine-tuned. After harvest, we will begin developing plans for planting the next growing season to ensure a steady supply of some staples like corn and watermelon.

Decades of tradition have led to great service from Mauro Farms. Visit them at 936 36th Lane, Pueblo, CO 81006 or www.maurofarms.com

For more information about our local farming relationships, please contact Jason Feld, Resource Manager at Jason@careandshare.org or 719-434-4688.