

2023 EDITION
ANNUAL REPORT

flashlight

A Publication of Volunteers of America Colorado

REPORT



**Building
Future Leaders**

**New Home,
New Opportunities**

**Generations of
Helping Others**

Our Mission

Volunteers of America Colorado seeks to identify and serve the basic needs of the most vulnerable individuals and families within the community.

Our Impact

106,702

PEOPLE SERVED

1,415,365

MEALS SERVED

200,689

HOURS VOLUNTEERED



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FLASHLIGHT REPORT
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Letters from our President/CEO and Board Chairman



Greetings to all! As some of you may know, every year at Volunteers of America Colorado we choose a theme that is designed to guide us forward for the coming months. This year, our theme is *Shine a Light in YOUR Community!*

I especially love this notion because for me, not only does “light” conjure images of illumination, but it also suggests notions of hope, goodness, and optimism. . .concepts that I aspire to in life, faith, and leadership. They are also what inspires our mission at VOA Colorado.

We have seen bright light shining this year through many positive and transformative changes that have benefited the lives of thousands of people in need in our community. Many of these changes—starting with the building of the new Theodora Family Hotel, the completed renovation of the Bob Magness Administration Building, the opening of our new Aging and Nutrition Services Center and Michael Kerns Kitchen—have been designed to help our team better serve Colorado veterans, children, seniors, families, and individuals who are experiencing homelessness and food insecurity. It is our priority to always look for new and innovative ways to help others. With your help, we are indeed transforming the lives of more than 100,000 Coloradans each and every day of the year.

Those transformations, of course, begin by providing tangible and impactful assistance such as food, housing, support, employment opportunities, and more. But there is also an emotional, even spiritual element as well. The changes that your generosity have helped support are also meant to be seen by our clients as a manifestation of our belief in them, in their worth, in their dignity, and in their abilities. We want the people we serve to know



Back in 1896, there were a number of historically significant events that occurred as the 20th century beckoned. The Ford Quadricycle was released, launching Henry Ford and his company into “putting America on wheels.” The Dow Jones Industrial Average was created with the original 12 companies which included General Electric and Bethlehem Steel. John Philip Sousa composed “Stars and Stripes Forever.” And our beloved Volunteers of America was established.

Volunteers of America was founded by Maud and Ballington Booth with the stated goal of uplifting all in need of help, going wherever the needs existed and doing whatever was necessary. That inspirational, all-encompassing message of love and support has endured and thrived in the 128 years that have followed VOA's inception. We who are honored today to carry on the Booth legacy in leading VOA Colorado take great pride in presenting this year's Annual Report.

We invite your review of the pages that follow to learn about the latest

that the care we take in the services we offer and in making our facilities safe, attractive, and accessible reflects how we feel about them, and how we hope they feel about themselves.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the help of our kind and compassionate partners. Partners like Sharon Magness Blake and Ernie Blake, who for 30 years have spearheaded our annual fundraiser, Western Fantasy, and helped raise millions of dollars to ensure that our programs and services can continue to reach as many people as possible and provide the life skills necessary to help end the cycle of food insecurity and homelessness. I am grateful for partners like The Anschutz Foundation, who most recently supported the new Theodora Family Hotel that will become a place of transformation and hope for families in homelessness transitioning to a home of their own. I could go on and on, but suffice it to say that VOA Colorado is very blessed to have a wonderful, generous network of partners, donors and friends and indeed I am grateful for each and every one of you!

Please know that YOU are the ones clothing, feeding, and encouraging those among us who need our help. THANK YOU for all the time, talent, and treasure you compassionately give to make this happen. We hope that you will continue to join VOA Colorado on this worthy journey of bringing light into communities, and neighborhoods in need all throughout Colorado.

By helping us illuminate the good that we can all do when we come together with our hearts and minds full of purpose and compassion, we will indeed “shine a light” and even change the world.

Sincerely,
Dave Schunk, President and CEO

chapter in our VOA story here in Colorado, which dates back to that very same year in 1896, a mere 20 years into Colorado's statehood.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to express our deepest thanks to the extraordinary, dedicated staff and volunteers who live the VOA mission every single day. On their shoulders rests the operation of all the programs, events, and services that touch the lives of thousands. We are also profoundly grateful to the organizations and individuals who have supported VOA Colorado with their generous donations of both financial and human capital.

My friends, we are on this journey together. . .and I will tell you that our “togetherness” only grows in importance as time marches on. And even though many things have changed in the past 128 years, one thing hasn't: the necessity but also the profound joy that comes from helping those in need. 128 years later, the vision of Maud and Ballington Booth is alive and well. . . thanks to you.

With warmest regards and blessings,
Glenn Rippey, Board Chairman

Impact Numbers

Number of Individuals Served Agencywide

106,702

Number of Meals Served

1,415,365

Number of Nights of Shelter Provided

997,294

16,192 Volunteers contributed **200,689** hours

Number of People Fed

71,465

Pounds of Food Distributed

763,499

Number of Veterans Served

2,537

Number of Veterans Attained Permanent Housing

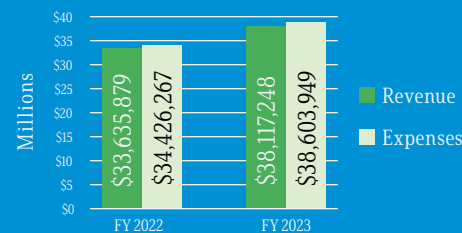
423

Volunteers of America Colorado

44 Locations Statewide

27 Affordable Housing Facilities Served

89.2¢ of every dollar goes directly to programs



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Programs

Hunger Services

- City Harvest Food Bank • Emergency Food Boxes
- Daily Meals at Volunteers of America Colorado Shelters and Preschool • Holiday Food Baskets
- Meals on Wheels Denver Metro, Larimer, Clear Creek, and Gilpin Counties
- Senior Dining Sites in Denver Metro and Larimer County

Community Support Services

- Adopt a Family and Santa Shop • Camp POSTCARD
- Caring Companions • Early Childhood Education Center
- Emergency Services at Volunteers of America Colorado Mission
- Gilpin & Clear Creek Counties Transportation
- Handyman Program in Denver Metro and Larimer County
- Healthy Aging Programs

Housing and Shelter Services

- 27 Affordable Housing Residences • Emergency Shelters
- Domestic Violence Shelter • Support Services for Veteran Families
- Transitional Housing for Families, Youth, and Veterans
- Rehousing and Rent Assistance Programs
- Re-entry for Justice-Involved Individuals

Volunteer Services

- AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent Program
- AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP Program in Denver Metro and Larimer County • Statewide Volunteer Opportunities for Families and Individuals • Corporate Engagement and Group Volunteer Programming Services



Building Future Leaders: Creating Confidence and Connection with Empowering Role Models

Before Oakes and his sister Indigo went to Camp POSTCARD (Peace Officers Striving To Create And Reinforce Dreams), neither had been away from home. So naturally when their mom, Jenny suggested the idea of a sleep-away camp, both kids—who are 12 and 10, respectively—were nervous. But as is often the case, not long after they arrived for the week-long adventure, the two siblings settled in and began to have the time of their lives!

Camp POSTCARD is a free week-long summer camp designed to benefit 5th and 6th graders from the Denver/Aurora metro area who demonstrate leadership skills and might not otherwise be able to afford such an experience. For many of the campers, like Oakes and Indigo, this represents their first camp experience. This popular and successful VOA Colorado program builds strong, positive adult/youth relationships and provides valuable life skills that will serve the campers, their families, and their communities for years to come. The experience provides a safe environment that stresses ideas, values, and the importance of role models.

There is also a bit of a “twist” to Camp POSTCARD. One way that the program establishes trusted bonds between youth and their lead counselors, is that the

counselors happen to be law enforcement officers and emergency personnel from the Denver metro area. This surprise, however, is not revealed to the campers until the final day of camp.

While that big discovery was “so cool,” according to Oakes, and “totally crazy” according to Indigo, there were many other things about Camp POSTCARD that made it not only memorable, but life changing. “For me,” Oakes recalls, “it was about learning about independence, how to do things without my phone, how to be a leader, and how to be brave.” For Indigo, it was about learning how to be more confident. “I made friends and did things I never did before, like zip-lining!”

Both kids also shared that they learned how to “use their voices.”

Jenny, Oakes’ and Indigo’s mom, saw these positive changes, too. “Their grandfather was a police officer, so they have always grown up respecting the blue,” she says. “I chose Camp POSTCARD because I wanted them to continue to have that positive perception of law enforcement, and also to learn skills that would help them navigate challenges. I know that they now have the tools and the confidence to hold their own and be heard.”

“It was about learning about independence, how to do things without my phone, how to be a leader, and how to be brave.”





New Home, New Opportunities:

Groundbreaking of the New Theodora Family Hotel & VOA Colorado's Rapid Rehousing Program

Volunteers of America Colorado is re-envisioning how families and veterans experiencing homelessness can move into permanent housing. In December, 2023, VOA Colorado broke ground on the new Theodora Family Hotel.

The ceremony was attended by many of our wonderful volunteers and donors, as well as Denver Mayor Mike Johnston, our partners from the Department of Housing Stability, our board chair Glenn Rippey, and representatives from the City and County of Denver.

The Theodora Family Hotel will allow us to serve families in greater numbers, in an improved facility, and offer more services. By the time this hotel is complete, in spring 2025, we will be able to house 60 families and veterans.

There are many unique features to the hotel, not the least of which is that it is a state-of-the-art trauma-informed space. It will include all of VOA Colorado's services, all of which go beyond what some call a hand-out. The services residents of the hotel will have access to are holistic and touch on all aspects of life.

This hotel is an example of VOA Colorado's mission in action and a testament to our investment in the lives of families and veterans in our community who need help and support.

That support is more important now than ever before. With too many people in our community experiencing food insecurity and homelessness—families, seniors, veterans, children—we cannot stop our efforts. Our work is not done, and the Theodora Family Hotel is just one of many programs and services that provide the life skills necessary to help end the cycle of food insecurity and homelessness in Colorado.

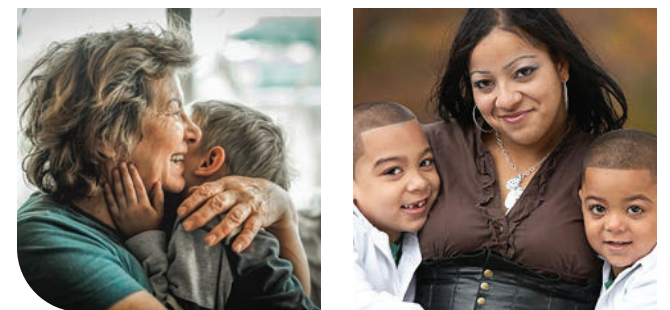
Other Family Housing Programs include the Shelter into Rapid Rehousing initiative. The goal of the program, as described by case manager Jeremy Miles, is to “take on families, while collaborating with other organizations such as the Denver Human Services, and provide them safety, support, resources, and the time to grow and become stable.”

For Tosha, a mom of four young children, the Shelter into Rapid Rehousing program was the fresh start and “the bridge” that she and her family needed. She and her family lived in the VOA

Family Motel for several months, invaluable time that allowed her to find a job, settle her older children into school, and begin to rebuild her life. Supported by Jeremy and his team, Tosha “worked the program,” received consistent case management, and eventually received vouchers through the Denver Housing Authority for an apartment.

“I had someone I could call any time,” she says. “I needed time and I needed someone to help me with the system. VOA Colorado did that for me. Today, my kids and I are in permanent and stable housing.

“The first night in our new home, we slept peacefully,” Tosha says. “No one was scared, we were together. When I look at where we were last year and where we are now, it’s amazing! It feels like home.”



One Veteran's Story of Strength and Resilience:

Serving Her Country and Serving Others

After I graduated from East High School in Denver, back in the early '90s, I didn't know what I wanted to do next in my life. Like a lot of kids at that age, I felt lost and confused.

College wasn't on my radar, so I decided to join the military. It was a good decision at the time and one that taught me many things and provided me with many life-changing experiences. I traveled, I lived in different states, I met amazing people, and I learned a ton.

I got out of the service after several years and came back to Colorado. Being a single mom of four I worked a lot of different jobs, including for the post office.

For a while, things were okay. But it seemed that just as quickly, they weren't.

My military duty changed me. I was proud to be in the Navy and to serve my country, but while in the service, I became an alcoholic. My 18-year addiction now included a drug addiction and was so profound that I lost my family and I lost my job. I became homeless and lived on the streets for years. Not surprisingly, my addiction severely impacted my mental and physical health, something that is still a challenge today.

I tell my story often, but even so, saying those words is difficult. Difficult, even though I overcame my addiction.

And even though it's difficult, I tell my story because it is one that I share with far too many veterans. Today in Colorado, nine percent of homeless people are veterans. On one single night in January 2022 in the U.S., 35,574 veterans were homeless in the same nation they had dedicated their lives to serving. Every day in the newspapers and on TV you hear stories of the rise in homelessness, especially among veterans. Denver's mayor is working hard to find a solution. I don't know why exactly this issue hits vets so hard; all I know is that it's a societal issue we need to do something about before it's too late.

I know that these proud and brave men and women don't want to be in the situation they are in. I know that they want something better for themselves and their families. Like me, many of them have tried rehabs and other ways to get their lives back on course, but too often their moments of sobriety don't last long. There are, of course, many factors that make it difficult; mental health issues, lack of employment, and food insecurity to name just a few.

It feels like yesterday that I was in the same spot that too many of Colorado's—and our country's—homeless veterans find themselves in. So, on this Veteran's Day, I want to tell the hopeful part of my story.

My story took a positive turn on a day about ten years ago. It was then that I happened to hear about a conference in downtown Denver about homelessness. I decided to walk in and I saw a table staffed by a team from Volunteers of America Colorado. They talked to me about their veterans' services and the housing and employment assistance they could provide. It didn't happen right away, but pretty soon I found myself going to VOA Colorado's meal service programs, taking showers at their facility, and taking part in support programs designed just for vets. And even though I had nothing, it wasn't long before they found me an apartment and helped me get a job. Suddenly, my life was improving. I credit having faith in God and in myself.

And what I think made all the difference was that the resources I received weren't *JUST* housing or *JUST* food. The resources I received addressed ALL my needs; from housing to employment to therapy.

And what *ALSO* made the difference was the people I encountered. Even at my initial intake meeting, I felt a spark ignite in my heart. I had felt completely broken but the people who helped me gave me hope. My recovery wasn't easy, but I am stronger for it. My children are healthy and happy, I have good friends and a good job, and I contribute to my community when I can.

In a full-circle moment, I now work for VOA Colorado as a cook (a skill I learned in the Navy!). I get to talk to other vets every day and nothing makes me happier than when I can share a bit of the hope that was given me with them. I tell them that there are resources available to them and to never give up. I listen and I tell them my story so they can see someone just like them, that's been where they are...scared, cold, hungry...but that's come out the other side.

Today I am a certified sous chef and I want to someday have my own business. And I will always be here for my fellow veterans who need support. My wish is that my fellow vets who are suffering find the help they need and that those who can step up and help them do so in any way you can.

“My military duty changed me.”

Breaking the Cycle:

Offering Hope and Opportunities to Women in Need

For those in our community who are experiencing homelessness, life is especially difficult. Helplessness is a daily struggle. Feelings of loneliness, desperation, and fear are often overwhelming.

The Irving Street Women's Residence, located in Denver, is one of Volunteers of America Colorado's programs that aims to provide a respite from that cycle of despair as women work to become housed in the community.

According to Courtney Fischer, the facility's senior residential manager, Irving Street is Colorado's only remaining Safe Haven program, a designation that allows it to serve chronically homeless women (which is defined as being homeless for one continuous year or four times in three years) who are disabled or experience mental health issues. The facility houses 25 women in 15 sleeping rooms, provides 24/7/365 access, and there is no maximum length of stay.

“Most of our residents have complex histories with homelessness,” Fischer explained. “It didn't take them a year or

two to become homeless, and it won't take them a year or two to get out (of the cycle).” Which is why the fact there is a no limit to how long someone can stay is so important, she added.

“These women have to unlearn survival behavior and relearn life skills,” she said. “We want to address all the factors that led to the homelessness and provide a continuum of care and connection so that when they are permanently housed, they can stay permanently housed.”

The programs and services include mental health resources, job assistance, and a focus on family reunification. This approach saves the system a great deal of money in the long-term.

The women at Irving Street are empowered to care for themselves by maintaining their living space in a healthy and sanitary manner, as well as participating in food preparation, planning their daily activities and providing support to one another in the community living environment. The facility is staffed 24/7 with a project manager, residential coordinators, case managers and a part-time mental health worker/consultant.





Generations of Helping Others:

One Family's Commitment to Changing the Lives of People in Need...One Meal at a Time



VOA Colorado volunteer, Heather Schelble

Today, Heather is passing along her servant's heart to her two little boys. Both of her sons—one just started kindergarten and the other just learned to walk—often come with her when she makes her Meals on Wheels deliveries every week.

With just about every delivery, Heather takes the time to talk with the recipients and form relationships that go beyond a simple dropping off of food. She remembers birthdays and anniversaries, names of grandchildren, and helps with laundry on occasion. Impacted by the isolation and even loneliness that she sometimes sees, not long ago she had the idea to give Christmas cards made by her children to the seniors on her route. That idea blossomed, and soon her extended family and children in her neighborhood joined in, then the entire school. In December of last year, she had gathered more than 900 handmade cards, each one received

Heather Schelble, volunteer for VOA Colorado's Meals on Wheels program, has a deep passion for helping others. Her grandfather delivered for Meals on Wheels in California for more than 40 years and well into his 90s. She would go with him on his route starting when she was just five years old.

along with the meal delivered. And on Valentine's Day she delivered another round of heart-felt love to those in need.

Volunteers of America Colorado's Meals on Wheels Program serves Adams, Arapahoe, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, Gilpin, Jefferson and Larimer counties. In 2023, the program delivered 1,415,365 meals to Coloradans experiencing food insecurity.

VOA Colorado has several other nutrition and food programs designed to assist individuals with their nutritional needs, families with emergency food, and food pantries and soup kitchens with staples, fresh produce, dairy, and baked goods. The City Harvest food program collects perishable and non-perishable donated foods and distributes to more than 50 community pantries and food banks serving low-income families and the homeless throughout the Denver Metropolitan Area, and the Congregate Dining Program provides nutritious meals, access to community resources and positive social interaction at Congregate Dining Centers.

Each Meals on Wheels delivery consists of an entrée and accompaniments such as vegetables, fruits, breads, milk, etc. that are needed to provide at least one-third of the recommended daily nutrients for older adults. The meals are low in fat and cholesterol and provide the valuable nutrients older adults need without the additional calories. Program services also include nutrition education, information and assistance in accessing other services available to the older adults.



City Harvest Food Bank provided
763,499
 pounds of food to over
50
 community pantries and food banks serving low-income families and the homeless throughout the Denver Metropolitan Area.

Number of people served in a month from City Harvest:
12,082

Number of people served in a year from City Harvest:
144,984

30%
 of the amount of people we serve are veterans.



30 YEARS OF WESTERN FANTASY



For 30 years, Western Fantasy has been Denver's premier philanthropic and social event and the inspiration of Sharon Magness Blake and longtime community leader, Jean Galloway. Through their leadership and guidance, and with the support of so many partners and friends, this year Western Fantasy raised a record \$2.8 million to

benefit VOA Colorado. The impact Western Fantasy has had on our ability to advocate for people in need in Colorado is profound and your generosity is what empowers us to create opportunities, foster unity, and provide essential resources to those in need. Together, we are making a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.



OUR STORY CONTINUES...

What grounds Volunteers of America Colorado's mission, to serve the basic needs of those in our community in need, is our desire to make an *IMPACT*. Every day we aspire to find ways to make a true and lasting difference in the lives of veterans, children, seniors, families, and individuals in our state who need support. This year we touched the lives of many people, but our commitment and devotion to continuing the work we do, with the help of our donors, partners, and volunteers, remains strong and steadfast every day, week, and month of every year.

Thank you for your support!