

## Colorado Agricultural Leadership Foundation to donate to new food bank

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*Karin Miller, center, hands her son Henry, 9, a cucumber seed as he plants alongside his brother, Simon, 13, center, and Taylor Chadwick, 14, at the*

Two nonprofits that address often unseen realities in Douglas County have collaborated to benefit each other.

Starting this year, the Colorado Agricultural Leadership Foundation (CALF) in Castle Rock is growing produce for the Fresh Harvest Food Bank in Lone Tree.

CALF, which operates out of the Lowell Ranch, strives to educate the public on the county's educational roots and teach young people where their food comes from, something the group says many children and adults are not

aware of.

Fresh Harvest Food Bank started out in a janitors' closet at Acres Green Elementary in Lone Tree in 2008 and since 2012 has had a facility where it helps about 150 families per year.

"With the economy kind of idling between really good and really bad, the job market isn't always there for these families. And it's not a lack of motivation or wanting to find a job or better themselves — it's something disruptive that has happened," like a death in the family or leader of household has died, said Michelle Tripp, director of communications for the food bank.

Tripp said the latest report from the Douglas County School District said about 800 kids were homeless — living with family or friends. Jen Zander, director of the food bank, said because it's behind closed doors people are not aware of the problem of homelessness and hunger in Douglas County.

"I think people think about people in this area that they're not struggling, but we're just down the street from a school with a high free and reduced lunch need there, so the need is there, it just may not be up front and personal," Zander said.

Tripp fostered a relationship with CALF when she worked for the school district a few years ago, but it was the idea of Brooke Fox, president and CEO of CALF, to grow produce for the food bank.

"Our mission is connecting people to agriculture," Fox said. "I think it's so important for people to have a really authentic look at where their food comes from, so it's helping us meet our mission of increasing awareness of where food comes from. But it's also providing them with fresh produce so it will be harvested and delivered the very same day."

The garden plot at the Lowell Ranch is about 30-by-40 feet out of CALF's 2-acre garden. CALF is growing tomatoes, zucchini and cucumbers, which were requested by the food bank because they will be used the most. Fox said they hope to produce 300-500 pounds of fresh produce this season for Fresh Harvest.

Tripp said she expects the produce the organization gets from CALF will feed all their families for about two to three months.

"When you feed people good, wholesome food, that's going to make them feel better. It will help them," Tripp said. "A Happy Meal may be \$1.99 and it's cheap, but is it the nutritional value you need?"

Fox said CALF's garden is educational and was planted in part with help from students and young people. Last week, teen volunteers from the Colorado chapter of Boys Team Charity Mile High League, an organization that links teens and their parents or guardians with local nonprofits for service projects, worked on the garden.

"It's just to expose families to a different world that we don't see in the Denver Metro area, and a lot of these kids don't have a background in agriculture or livestock knowledge," said Lesley Gibson, co-president of the Colorado chapter of Boys Team Charity Mile High League.

Zander said eventually they would like their food bank to purchase 70 percent of their food from places like Sprouts and Sam's Club and get the rest donated.

### **More info**

For more information on CALF, visit [thecalf.org](http://thecalf.org) or call 303-688-1026. For more information on Fresh Harvest Food Bank, visit [freshharvestfoodbank.org](http://freshharvestfoodbank.org) or call 720-381-6169.