

## FISH OF WESTMINSTER, INC – 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

FISH OF WESTMINSTER was established in 1970 by a group of Westminster Christians, called to express their love and concern for their neighbors. In the early days, FISH was the emergency service referral network for the entire city. As the city grew and matured, and more social services became available, FISH evolved in two neighborhood food pantries – one at Westminster Presbyterian Church (WPC) and one at Westminster United Methodist Church (WUMC).

In this unusual and extremely challenging COVID year, FISH of Westminster was able to continue to provide neighbors with needed food, hygiene supplies, and cleaning supplies through one of its two food pantries.

2020 started out as a normal year, however, the coronavirus changed all that. Like most church hosted activities we closed both pantries in mid-March. With excellent support from the Tri-County Health Department, we were able to re-open the food pantry at WPC in mid-May using a drive-through food distribution model. We started off slowly, but by October we were helping over 500 clients per month. Unfortunately, the WUMC facility had to remain closed through 2020, so their food pantry was unable to reopen.

Unemployment within the Front Range grew significantly at the beginning of the pandemic resulting in increased need for food assistance. Unfortunately, the closure of both food pantries in mid-March required clients look elsewhere for food assistance. Once the WPC FISH Food Pantry re-opened, their clients began to return. By the end of the year, their numbers had returned to pre-pandemic levels.

In 2020, FISH of Westminster:

- Assisted **7,056 people**,
- Aided **2165 families**,
- Provided **74,469 meals**,
- Supported **399 homeless individuals** (229 via food pantry/150 via outreach) with food and hygiene products.

While the WUMC Food Pantry had to cancel their Thanksgiving Box program, the WPC FISH Food Pantry was able to provide 150 Christmas Food Bags to their clients. The bags included canned and packaged food items; homemade cookies

donated by members of the congregation, friends, and the sisters of P.E.O. Chapter HX-Westminster/Thornton; and a gift certificate to King Soopers for \$10 for the purchase of an entrée. Each bag had sufficient food to feed a family of 4 one large holiday meal. Families received multiple food bags if they had more than 4 members. The 150 gift certificates (\$1,500) were paid for by FISH of Westminster.

FISH of Westminster provided over \$3,750 worth of hygiene goods and supplies as well as headlamps, gloves, and socks for the homeless in our area through the WPC FISH Food Pantry. In the fall, they partnered with a local citizen who walks the homeless camps weekly talking to people and distributes goods, water, and food. His efforts were supported using these funds, donations received by the WPC FISH Food Pantry from Kum & Go, and goods/gift cards provided by Westminster and Adams County.

Over the past few years, FISH of Westminster has invested in maturing as a community organization – enhancing or developing new partnerships within the community, establishing an Internet presence, and developing effective communication tools. Because of the coronavirus pandemic and people’s desire to help those experiencing food insecurity, the results of these efforts included:

- Financial contributions from local NGOs and businesses including We Don’t Waste, Network for Good, and Murdochs Ranch and Home Supply;
- Financial donations from throughout the community, beyond the members of the two sponsoring congregations and long-term sponsors; and
- New volunteers from within the community were recruited through the FISH of Westminster Internet page (<https://fishofwestminster.org>).

The two annual fundraisers open to the community, Afternoon Tea at WPC and the Pancake Breakfast at Applebee’s Restaurant, had to be cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic. Fortunately, new donors more than made up the difference from the loss of revenue from these two events.

Long-time partnerships also continued with:

- Valente’s Italian Deli and Bakery, and Curves; and
- Grocery Rescue (a Food Bank of the Rockies program) partnerships with King Soopers, Walmart, Starbucks, and Kum & Go, which resulted in donations of bakery goods, meat and dairy products, canned and boxed items, produce, and non-food items.

The primary government funding sources for FISH of Westminster in 2020 were:

- USDA - The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP - WUMC only),
- City of Westminster Human Services Grant,
- City of Thornton Human Services Grant, and
- City of Thornton CARES Act Grant.

A significant portion of the NGO funds (specifically from We Don't Waste) and the City of Thornton CARES Act Grant were spent on upgrading the appliances and facilities at both food pantries including new freezers, refrigerators, and shelving. These improvements will help ensure the safety of purchased and donated food items. Additional replacements are needed at WUMC, and will be purchased in the near future.

FISH of Westminster is an entirely volunteer organization with volunteers ranging from 6 years old through 92 years old. These volunteers make it possible to keep our doors open. Even with one food pantry being closed much of the year, the **65 volunteers** donated **6,000 hours** in 2020.

Thank you to everyone who has supported FISH of Westminster, Inc. throughout 2020! We believe 2021 will be a better year for our clients and our organization!

FISH of Westminster, Inc. is a proud partner of the Food Bank of the Rockies.