

## FISH OF WESTMINSTER, INC – 2023 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 established four neighborhood food pantries. The first pantry was established in 1976. The pantry at Westminster Presbyterian Church (WPC) was the third pantry, established in 1996. The fourth pantry was established at Westminster United Methodist Church. By the end of the COVID pandemic, FISH was able to host the one pantry at WPC.

In 2023:

- **6,170 clients** were served from the food pantry (a 13% increase over 2022);
- **900 clients experiencing homelessness** were served in the local area through direct outreach – receiving food, hygiene supplies, and cold weather gear;
- **62,600 meals** were provided;
- **175 sets of diapers/wipes** were distributed;
- **84 students participating in the Front Range Community College TRIO Upward Bound program** were provided supplemental food and hygiene supplies; and over
- **58,000 pounds of food** were distributed.

Clients of the FISH Food Pantry are helped with food boxes each visit. Housed clients are provided sufficient food to feed their family 10 meals a month. Unhoused clients are provided food kits, hygiene kits, fresh water and pre-packaged meals when available.

FISH of Westminster provided food and hygiene kits to 200+ unhoused visitors to the food pantry. Food for homeless kits was primarily provided by our Church of Latter-Day Saints of Westminster Stake partners. In addition, FISH of Westminster provided over \$5,700 worth of hygiene goods and cold weather supplies such as gloves, socks, and blankets for the homeless in our area. Since 2020, we have partnered with Alan Farb and his team of volunteers to meet the needs of the homeless in our area. Mr. Farb walks the homeless camps weekly with various volunteers, talking to people and distributing goods, water, and food as well as gift

cards when they are available. In 2023, he connected with 900 clients. His efforts were also supported by Westminster and Adams County.

Since 2022, we have worked to ensure we meet the food needs of our diverse clientele, primarily with unique specialty items. We also have printed our client materials in multiple languages to facilitate communication between our volunteers and clients. Fortunately, many of our clients are multi-lingual (at least 2 languages) and help translate for our clients when they see we are struggling.

In 2022, we entered into a partnership with the Front Range Community College TRIO Upward Bound Program located at Westminster High School. Snack items and hygiene products are provided to food insecure students participating in this program. The 40+ students in this program (per semester) are the first generation to plan go to college from their families. They receive additional training and coaching to develop the skills needed to apply and navigate the college experience, requiring they stay later than normal after school.

Since 2022, the food pantry has made diapers/wipes available to clients in addition to food. Over 175 sets of diapers/wipes were distributed through the year.

Over the past few years, FISH of Westminster has been maturing as a community organization – enhancing or developing new partnerships within the community, establishing an Internet presence, and developing effective communication tools. The results of these efforts included:

- Financial contributions from local businesses including 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 who were recruited through the FISH of Westminster Internet page (<https://fishofwestminster.org>).

Long-time partnerships also continued with:

- Valente's Italian Deli and Bakery,
- Local scout troops/ships, and
- Grocery Rescue (a Food Bank of the Rockies program) partnerships with King Soopers and Kum & Go, which resulted in donations of bakery goods, meat and dairy products, canned and boxed items, produce, and non-food items.

The government funding sources for FISH of Westminster in 2023 were:

- City of Westminster Human Services Grant and
- City of Thornton Human Services Grant.

Our partnership with WPC goes beyond them hosting the FISH Food Pantry and storage areas in their space. They:

- sponsored three fundraisers for FISH in 2023,
- raised funds separately through private donations and memorial gifts,
- applied for and received a grant from the Denver Presbytery to help fund food pantry operations, and
- partnered with other congregations to provide two dinners a month to neighbors – including food insecure individuals/families and the homeless. In 2023, these congregations hosted their first Thanksgiving Day luncheon and plan to continue this program in 2024.

In 2023, FISH of Westminster also signed a lease with WPC for a small office space to work from.

FISH of Westminster is an entirely volunteer organization with volunteers ranging from 7 years old through 92 years old. These volunteers make it possible to keep our doors open. The **33 volunteers** donated **2,040 hours** in 2023. The total value of in-kind donations, including volunteer labor, space at WPC and donated food and hygiene supplies, was valued at \$58,846.

Thank you to everyone who has supported FISH of Westminster, Inc. throughout 2023!

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