



Food Pantry Braces to Help Thousands of Boulderites Facing Loss of Food Benefits

Three years after the start of a global pandemic most aspects of life have returned to normal. However, for many of Boulder's most vulnerable individuals and families, they face a new hardship.

In 2020, the US government extended food benefits to help millions of households most affected by the pandemic. Those benefits, known as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) will expire at the end of February. As of March 1, a family of 4 will receive ~\$350 less a month. Individuals will receive ~\$90 less a month.

"We've already seen about a 40% uptick in visits." Liam McClure, Client Programs Manager at Harvest of Hope Pantry.

Harvest of Hope Pantry is a non-profit that opened its doors in 2012, providing free food to anyone in need, in a grocery store environment.

"People really appreciate having some choices. Some food providers hand you a box of set items but here you can choose what you need. I think it helps normalize food access", says McClure

The Pantry provides food for the housed and unhoused, with separate shopping times for both groups. "People have different needs. Someone unhoused, without a kitchen, needs ready-to-eat, portable foods. Whereas a family may want fresh meat and vegetables to cook with."

Currently, SNAP provides over \$5 million in food assistance each month to over 20,000 people in Boulder County based on income eligibility. Benefits come the first of the month, though by the 15th, McClure says Pantry visits start to climb as people have used their allotted benefits. McClure expects that in March, the need for supplemental food will come even earlier in the month.

"We want people to know they don't have to face this alone. This will be a sizable shortfall for a lot of households, and that's why we are here.", says McClure.

About half of the food the Pantry provides is donated from food drives. "We really are a community focused organization. We count on volunteers, donated food, and monetary donations. This will be a tough time for a lot of folks, but we are prepared to meet the challenge."

Harvest of Hope Pantry is a registered 501(c)(3) charitable organization that provides food assistance to anyone in need. The Pantry is located at 4830 Pearl St. in Boulder and offers 2 shopping times a day, Monday through Friday. They welcome volunteers, donations and donated food (with some guidelines). www.HopePantry.org