“Healthy and Safe.” That was our mantra as we faced the unprecedented challenges of last year. I am happy to share that after responding to the community’s needs for the past eleven months, we all remain healthy, safe, and as you are reading this have begun receiving our vaccinations.

Our Nourish and Crisis Engagement Programs were impacted the greatest by the pandemic. We saw requests for help explode and our ability to respond had to change immediately.

The Choice Pantry moved outside to a drive-thru model distributing prepackaged boxes of food to hundreds of cars daily through wind, rain, snow, and heat. We also developed a home delivery system in partnership with many others to deliver food to families quarantining and isolating due to the pandemic. Douglas County Health Department, One World, Whispering Roots, Catholic Charities, Big Garden, Latino Center, Intercultural Senior Center, and Together all came together to ensure nutritious food was delivered to our most vulnerable community members in their greatest time of need. All these extraordinary efforts from all distribution points resulted in 161,000 boxes of food being distributed (also translated as 2.8 million pounds of food or 3.4 million meals). Essentially, we experienced a 400% increase in demand for our Nourish program over the previous year.

The Crisis Engagement Program pivoted to mostly virtual responding to emergency financial requests to stop evictions and stabilize housing. Given the importance of housing in a pandemic, the need we saw was overwhelming. Our team responded to 341% more phone calls leading to 219% more households served, and 739% more financial assistance provided than in the previous year. They also remained steadfast in their service as co-lead of the community’s street outreach team. They ensured our community’s most vulnerable had the supplies they needed to stay safe during the pandemic providing PPE, tents, sleeping bags, and hygiene items.
Our Horizons Program remained committed to our program. Our program participants experienced elevated levels of anxiety and nervousness during the pandemic resulting in a need for more frequent touchpoints and our team responded to these elevated needs with health and safety in mind. Additionally, they improved the recidivism and utilization rates and average days to move in during the pandemic. The recidivism rate dropped to 5%, the utilization rate increased to 64%, and the average days to move in dropped to 48. These are all indicators that we supported people more efficiently with greater impact.

Pilot referral projects with CHI and UHC continued through the pandemic with minimum interruptions and have moved into more permanent program models. We continue to collect data, assess program outcomes, and adjust according to the feedback received. In February, we are expecting our first 5 graduates from the UHC program out of the original 15 participants. These individuals have strived and experienced success over the past 12-15 months stabilizing and moving into sustainable permanent housing. Congratulations to these individuals for transforming their lives.

Responding to the pandemic has had a dramatic impact on our organization and its operations. Our expenses in 2020 grew 87% over the previous year largely due to increased food and housing support costs. Thankfully, our revenue grew 110% fueled by a 63% increase in new donors to meet the increased expenses and demand on our organization and we are beyond grateful for the overwhelming support we received. We remain concerned about the sustainability of this effort as we predict having to maintain this level of operations through the end of 2021 at a minimum.

The additional demand for our services and 50% reduction in volunteers required us to add 7 full-time and part-time staff as well as 6 AmeriCorps members. We also completed a parking lot expansion and purchased two adjacent properties all to respond to the unprecedented demand we experienced last year and to allow us to continue to respond today and shape our work in the future.

Our organizational turnover remained very low and the turnover we experienced improved the professionalism and leadership of the organization providing an even better foundation for our future. Additionally, we updated our Strategic Plan to guide us through 2022 and reflects the impact of the pandemic and our more immediate organizational goals.

All in all, we “survived and thrived” last year and against significant head winds the organization experienced one of its most impactful years on record. We were and continue to be honored and humbled to be on the front lines responding to our community’s needs in its time of greatest need.

Thank you for joining us on our journey and allowing us to support our community in unprecedented ways. We look forward to your support and partnership in the coming year. As successful as last year was, a lot of work remains, and we are still facing a long road to recovery for the individuals and families we serve each and every day.

Warmest Regards,

Mike Hornacek
President and CEO
SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

- **526** Households diverted from homelessness
- **3,441,358** Meals served
- **1,856** Case management appointments
- **2,867,798** Pounds of food distributed
- **$940,277** Financial assistance through prevention
- **67** People experiencing homelessness placed in permanent housing
- **154,721** Individuals served through choice food pantry
This past year has been anything but easy. We would like to thank all of you for your continued support; your dedication to our mission allows us to support our community to the best of our ability, and brings us closer everyday to preventing and ending hunger and homelessness.
OUR FINANCIALS

RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS
$74,950.20
PRIVATE DONATIONS
$301,309.81
OTHER
$436,333.09
GOVERNMENT
$446,385.45
FOUNDATIONS
$1,000,000.00
CORPORATE
$1,889,124.00
INKIND DONATIONS
$4,657,156.25

TOTAL $8,805,258.80

FUNDRAISING
$244,355.38
ADMINISTRATION
$502,539.66
PROGRAMS
$7,331,475.69

TOTAL $8,089,370.73
Together has seen a dramatic increase in those we are serving on-site due to the pandemic. As part of our support, we also launched a home pantry delivery service in concert with the Douglas County Department of Health and other community partners. We recently delivered food to a program participant named Beverly and her three children. Beverly was at home recovering from COVID-19. Beverly called the Douglas County Health Department as they had no food in the house and gaining access was not possible at the time. Additionally, her sister recently lost her job and was planning to move in with Beverly when Beverly’s recovery was complete. The Health Department referred Beverly to Together, and our team was able to deliver food that day to Beverly and her family. Beverly was extremely grateful and told our team, “Thank you, thank you…you don’t know how much we appreciate this!”
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