When we hear the word ‘resiliency’, we think of Sara, who lost her adaptive yoga business during the pandemic. She got herself enrolled for SNAP, leaned on our drive-through food distribution to fill the gaps, and re-launched herself as a notary and legal doula. Now, she’s coordinating with our community development team to offer her services to other members of our community free of charge.

We think of Alejandro, who started using our commercial kitchen after he faced discrimination in the kitchen he had been using, adapting his taco business to make it through the pandemic with corporate catering gigs, and whose spicy salsa makes us weep for joy.

We think of Maria*, who is supporting her kids through virtual learning despite a lack of high-speed internet in her neighborhood, and who is making use of our technology library to lead cooking clubs and diabetes management classes in Spanish.

We think of John, who lost his retail job that had brought him pride and sense of purpose in addition to a paycheck.

It is each of these resilient humans who teach us the meaning of resiliency. Sara is more than just one of the nearly half of Black small business owners who lost their business last year: she’s an amateur nutritionist and vegan. Alejandro is more than just a DACA recipient: he’s a salsa dancer with a laugh and a smile that begs you to remain cranky. Maria is more than just one of the 400,000 workers in Colorado who lack the papers to live without constant fear of deportation: she’s a mother to four children who fought her way back from a tough injury this past fall with a tamale recipe that could give anyone’s abuela a run for their money. And John is more than just the one in five workers with disabilities who lost their job during the pandemic: he’s employee of the month who’s choosing tea over soda these days and who pitched in $5 to our annual fundraising campaign. Each of them is a hustler and a dreamer and vital member of our community caring for their families and loved ones the best they can, while also finding the time and energy to contribute and give back to others in Metro Caring’s community.

And these people, as inspirational as they are, are but four of the 83,000 people that make up Metro Caring’s community. Watching all these human beings in all their grace and beauty, complexity and fullness, face down the challenges, struggle, grief, and rage that this last year bore upon them with strength and determination can teach us all far more about resilience than we could ever hope articulate in a few hundred words.

This thing—the pandemic and the economic fallout affected all of us, but it did not affect us all equally. It fell onto the backs of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people who have borne the brunt of 400 years of persistent and grinding systemic racism. That racism, which we all bore witness to over the summer when George Floyd was murdered, is something that Black and Brown people have been bearing and resisting for hundreds

*Name changed for privacy.*
of years. It is that racism that led to the disproportionate infection and hospitalization rates from COVID-19, disproportionate loss of life, and disproportionate loss of income. Children, women, those that identify as LGBTQ, people with disabilities, and people of color were all more likely to face the specter of empty cupboards and no money to buy food.

Metro Caring’s diverse community consists of over 75% people of color and people of all ages and abilities. Over the past year, we’ve witnessed each other’s pain and strength in ways that would be hard for many people to imagine. We did our best to show up for one another. We grieved together when we lost a young and dynamic member of our community, Wilbur, who just two summers ago, skateboarded every day to our freight farm for a summer high school internship and built the biggest salad we’ve ever seen to feed his class with the greens he grew.

We came together to pivot our free fresh food market operations to a walk-up, drive-through, and delivery model literally overnight and cover the work of all the older volunteers who could no longer safely come in. We upped the number of allowable monthly visits for food assistance. In early summer, we began experimenting with ways to restore some of the dignity of choice that shoppers had at our market, and released culturally responsive food bags and boxes, with options for Latinx, Middle Eastern, vegan, vegetarian, and heart-healthy diets.

We figured out ways to safely maintain our gardens and urban agriculture operations, community organizing and activation, health and nutrition classes and clubs, and community and economic development work. This included shifting many of our in-person programs and activities to a digital space. We fundraised for laptops, tablets, and hotspots to support staff and volunteers working from home, including community leaders leading cooking clubs, and temporary staff.

All of this we did together with our full community and with each person pitching in from what they had in abundance: laid off workers and students gave time, many gave money at levels ranging from one dollar to six figure gifts, others provided introductions or asked their friends and family to pitch in. Everyone—from all the races, religions, political affiliations, abilities, and socio-economic statuses that comprise the Metro Caring family—gave until it felt good. Through it all we continuously worked to improve.

We’re still averaging 300% of pre-COVID levels of need for emergency food and expect the need to remain high for at least two more years. However, food insecurity in Colorado is not an issue unique to the pandemic. Colorado has struggled with hunger for far too long. Systemic racism has had its knee on people of color for centuries. Discrimination against people with disabilities is as old as humanity. Minimum wage workers haven’t received a raise in decades. Meanwhile the costs for housing, health care, and education are soaring. The economic challenges presented by COVID-19 only amplify these challenges.

Resilience means more than getting through. It means more than surviving and getting “back to normal”. It means reimagining a better way. It means putting in the hard work to rebuild back better together. And, it means finding joy in the work together along the way: the photo of John’s $5 check AND our biggest check shared among the team texted with a round of celebratory emojis, the fire of Alejandro’s salsa as we enjoy his tacos during a staff meeting, the “Amen!” when Sara says something wise yet again, and the happy dance with the kids in the cooking club as they taste their first latke.

Our community, which includes our staff, board members, volunteers, community partners, donors, and our program participants— they are the personification of resiliency. There’s no other team we’d rather work with to rebuild back better than the Metro Caring Family.

Teva Sienicki, CEO
Deborah Price, Board Chair
Walk-up, Drive-thru, and Delivery Options

The first day our building closed, our operations were completely turned upside down and reinvented. Our parking lot was redesigned into an efficient, no-contact food distribution capable of handling the increased demand on our direct food access. The entryway of our building transformed into an outdoor walk-up food distribution area as well as an area to connect community members with ID and birth certificate vouchers. Our volunteers took such fantastic ownership over these new processes and really helped us dial in not just the new operational aspects of our distribution model but how to continue to do this work in an equitable and dignified way.

Not all of our community members could safely access food via our new walk-up and drive-thru models, so we began partnering with a community run organization, Bondadosa, to deliver food to our community members four days per week. Deliveries have been a great way to safely deliver food to community members who might fall into some of the at-risk categories for COVID-19. Our delivery services are a new best practice that will be carried on after the covid-chapter of our operations come to a close. Transportation has always been named as a big barrier for many of our community members, and deliveries have been a great way to overcome that barrier.
Introducing Culturally-relevant Bags and Boxes

When Metro Caring had to close our market and shift to a pre-packed distribution model, the first thing staff and volunteers started working on was how to incorporate choice into this new way of distributing food. This led to the creation of some of our food bag options such as our Latinx bags, filled with produce like cilantro, tomatoes, nopales, hot peppers, avocados, masa flour, rice and beans. During the month of Ramadan we were able to offer our Muslim community members bags with items like figs, dates, tea, zaatar, lebni, nuts, oil, olives, rice and Halal chicken. For the first time we were also able to offer Lunar New Year bags to community members with items like broccoli, green beans, oil, red envelopes, lotus root, green onions, cabbage, ginger, oranges, noodles and banh tet.

We began the use of two mobile shelving systems for our walk-up area and drive-thru containing all sorts of non-food items like diapers, wipes and many personal hygiene items. Via our delivery process we were able to accommodate special requests and dietary restrictions to ensure that community members who could not come in-person for food were still able to benefit from the added choice options.

A Community Member Story of Resilience

During the pandemic, Metro Caring shifted how it partnered with other organizations in the community. We opened our parking lot each morning and offered culturally accessible food to partners working in refugee and immigrant communities. The food items were tailored for families with children, schools, and parents. We upped the number of boxes going to long-standing partners such as the Colorado Coalition to the Homeless.

Joe Peters, Colorado Coalition For The Homeless, Case Worker

“As a formerly homeless individual, I know what it is like to live on the streets. People are scared. They already felt unsafe, but that is compounded by everything going on with this virus. People are afraid to be in close quarters in shelters, so they are staying outside – thankfully the weather has been nice. I am bringing boxes to people who were formerly homeless; they fear that when this is all over, they may lose the housing they currently have. My advice for people wanting to help is show compassion, try to understand what they are going through, and educate yourself.”

Increase in food procurement budget

2 Days closed due to COVID-19

3,000%
Hiring Community Members as Part-time Staff

It has been incredibly rewarding to engage with our community members in several different capacities. We have brought on ten community members as part-time staff to help meet the increased operational demand. They have stepped up as exemplary leaders, mentors, and innovators, always thinking outside the box. Without their additional support and insight, we would not be where we are. They work tirelessly covering all our shifts, six days a week. The passion they radiate for our mission and community inspires all of us.

Language Justice

To continuously pursue equity, language justice is at the forefront of our anti-hunger movement. We meet people where they are, and aim to ensure all community members are meet with an inclusive and safe landscape. This includes expanding services, resources, and personnel with the language skills to match our diverse community. Currently we work to translate documents into Spanish, Arabic, and Mandarin Chinese. With a community that speaks over 50 languages, this is only the beginning of our language justice work.
Sharlotte is a single mother of four children who lost her job due to the pandemic. To make ends meet, she began selling homemade jewelry and accessories out of their home, which was her car at the time. Having done this to survive for eight months, supplementing her food needs with Metro Caring’s drive-thru distribution, she would walk around with her children, applying for jobs and selling accessories. She recently landed a new job in Denver, one that she is overjoyed by. She promises we will continue to have her electrifying energy visits us at Metro Caring.

Hydrofarm
Metro Caring owns a hydroponic container farm, which we call the Hydrofarm. It is a wonderful donation from the Morgridge Family Foundation of an upcycled shipping container outfitted with a drip irrigation system designed to grow leafy green vegetables. Those leafy greens and herbs are distributed through our Direct Food Access and Nutrition programs. Working with local youth and workforce programs, we practice knowledge-sharing and build community wealth.

Greenhouse
Our greenhouse is offered to community partners each year to grow vegetable, herb, and flower seedlings for local entrepreneurs, mutual aid organizations, and community gardens. Our goals are to share our resources to build knowledge, power, and wealth in our local communities.

Total number of garden plot participants
76

Total number of seedlings distributed
5,000+

Total number of seeds packets distributed
450+
A Community Member Story of Resilience

Adriana* was involved in Cocina y Nutrición in Spring 2021. The past year held many difficulties for her, as she supported her young child in remote learning and staying healthy, and her husband had a challenge with immigration. Then, like many others, she became infected with COVID-19 and even after recovery experiences lingering side effects. She told Eva that Cocina y Nutrición had made a big impact for her and now she seeks to exercise each day and encourage her child to do so as well to stay healthy. She shared, “Being active is the best medicine.”

*Name changed for privacy.
Colorado Necessary Documents Renewal

Have you ever experienced that sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach when you realize you’re lost your purse or misplaced your wallet? Or spend days and weeks trying to replace the items that were stolen or lost? It takes time and money to secure the documents for a Colorado ID. It costs an average of $50 a person to get all the documents together necessary to apply, and for low-income people, $50 is prohibitively expensive and ultimately a barrier to replacing their documents. Metro Caring partnered with Colorado Center on Law and Policy and 26 other statewide partners to ensure this program continues to be funded in the future.

COVID-19 Education

A large majority of our 83,000 community members identify as Black, Brown, or Indigenous people of color (BIPOC). Therefore, our Metro Caring community has been disproportionally impacted by the COVID-19 health pandemic and economic crisis. BIPOC Coloradans have experienced higher rates of COVID-19 infection, hospitalization, and death; we have suffered disproportionate losses of income during the economic crisis; and we have disproportionately had more barriers to accessing the COVID-19 vaccine than our white neighbors. As a trusted messenger to our community, we hosted virtual Champions of Vaccine Equity community meetings to answer questions around the vaccination, and hosted a vaccination clinic to ensure our community has access to the COVID vaccine.
Board of Directors

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Deborah Price
Retired CFO,
Thermoflex Corporation

Vice President
Iris Gardner
Career Director,
Trilogy Education Services

Secretary
Jamen Tyler
Managing Director,
StoneTurn LLP

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Mike Porter
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Retired Registered Dietitian

DC Coulon
Retired Youth Counselor,
Denver Human Services

Doug Hock
Communications Consultant,
Doug Hock Communications, LLC

Nicole Lang
Senior Communications Specialist,
Stantec

Teva Sienicki
CEO,
Metro Caring

Income

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Expenses

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<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENSES</strong></td>
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**TOTAL NET ASSETS**: $7,490,202

**INCREASE IN NET ASSETS**: $2,097,801
Roots to Rise Society
By making a five-year financial pledge to the organization, Roots to Rise Society members are a special group of friends that believe in Metro Caring’s mission and want to ensure that we can meet people’s immediate need for nutritious food for as long as needed in our community and invest in the long-term work of movement building, organizing, and advocacy to end hunger at its root.

$25,000+ per year
Deborah Price

$10,000–$24,999 per year
Becca and Robert Reichenberger
Mike and Cheryl Porter

$1,000–$9,999 per year
Adeeb and Heidi Khan
Adrienne Hipsher and Jason Davies
Al and Sheryl Kraizer
Andrea and Ted Miller
Anonymous
Ayelet Margolin-Lehman and Michael Lehmans
Bill and Rhonda Crossen
Bob and Marty Longway
Bob and Shirley Traettino
Brian and Lori Whitney
Carlotta Mast
Caroline H. Beavers
Central Presbyterian Church
Charlie Lanigan
Colleen Barrett
David and Jean Scott
David Suppes
DC Coulon
Dick and Deborah Galaty
Dominic Dezzuti
Don and Marianne Hamilton
Donna Munip
Doug and Jenny Hock
Dr. Nancy McMahon

The GreenHouse
The GreenHouse is a special group of supporters who have chosen to donate monthly.

Alan and Cheryl Zimmerman
Alexander Merkle and
May Merkle-Tan
Amelia and Reut Tenne
Amy Lorton
Andrea Helsel
Andrew and Andrea Carpenter
Andrew Treaster
Annie Sovcik and David Stapleton
Arlene Pickett
Barbara Schaller
Barry Ollman
Betsy Miller
Bonnie Adrian
Bruce and Priscilla Brookings
Bryan and Katy Kaproth-Gerich
Buck Mann
C. Rundell Brown
Carema CookMasaud
Carrie Zwider
Catherine Hupp
Charles and Suzanne Strickland
Christ Episcopal Church
Chrisy Ewell
Colin O’Brien
Cory Laney
David Craven
David Cunningham
David Krause
David Lock
David Pardo
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Erik Hicks
Ernie and Alice Jablonski
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Iris Gardner
Jamen Tyler
James and Lisa Van Someren
James East and David Johns
James W. Braun
Jan and John Douglas
Janice and Chuck Woodward
Janie and Ray Johnson
Jason and Molly Gaines
Jennie and Kevin Lewis
Jim and Chirl Sienicki
Jo Ann and Sam P egues
John and Patricia Shively
Judith Ackerman and Jon Brause
Kelly L. McCormick
Krista and Dan Wesdyk
Kurt Bethke
Linda Mitchell
Lisa and Warren Hughes
Lisa Whitesides
Luke and Nicole Laydon
Lynne and Rod Valentine
Madeline McKeever
Marisa Porter
Mark Bell and Alex Kaltch
Martha Burroughs
Matt and Laura Arentsen
Megan Sawyer
Mel Stoizenburg
Meredith Wells and Therese Pocmnick
Mike and Jill Ogborn
Mike and Susan Boulden
Milt Kahn and Betsy Herrick
Mr. Stuart Ferguson and Ms. Carolyn Welsh
Nancy Hodges
Nicholas and Amy Rosevear
Nicole Lang
Paul Heiltenrater and John Farnam
Ray and Marcia Giske
Richard Abels
Rick and Kim Turnage
Rick and Pat Kahn
Russell and Sue Haskell
Sarah Boulden
Sean and Sue Connelly
Shelley Hook
Shen Nagel
Spiras Antonescu and Barbara Wells
St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church
Stephanie and Chris Hegland
Steven Morrow and Denise Cope
Susie and Henry Higginbottom
Teton Waters Ranch
Teva Sienicki and Adrienne Russman
Tod Miller
Tom and Kris Stoever
Tom and Mary Brook
Way Shen and Chris George

Penny Sue Hollon
Peter and Julie Sauer
Peter Ferguson
Peter Thulson
Rachel Hanson
Rebecca Johnson
Ria Bates
Richard and Cheri Colter
Rick Wallace
Robert and Pam Hubbard
Robin Rasco
Salethea Isaacson
Sam Pegues
Samantha Kingston
Sarah Grey
Sarah Huthlander
Shelby Healy
Stephanie Jensen
Stu and Gina Menzier
Susan and Chris Dolson
Susan Bardwell and Frank Scalise
Susan Ladley
Susanna and Mark Donato
Tasha Russman
The Bindabuelt Family
The Yasui-Estacio Family
Theo Izoz
Theresa Cashman
Tim Baldwin
Tim Creany
Tom Keyse and
Jen Courtney-Keyse
Tyler Coson-Riker
Vanessa Souza
Wil Smith and Bryce Clark
William and Marilyn Henderson
Zach and Ashley Leonard
A Community Member Story of Resilience

“When I found myself out-of-work and living out of my car, it was one of the lowest points in my life. I didn’t see how I could ever get back on my feet. Thanks to the ID Voucher Program, I was able to obtain a copy of my driver’s license for a new job opportunity. I’ve been at that job for two years now, and have moved out of my car and into an apartment.”

—Sofia Rodriguez, Metro Caring community member