



## Summer Not All Fun & Games by Bobbi Mese, Executive Director

The heat isn't the only problem facing Morgan County residents this summer. Morgan County families are struggling on a daily basis to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table. Parents are working multiple jobs and skipping meals just so they can make sure their children are fed. The food bank at Caring Ministries has been hit hard because school is out and children need food the most. The average family size Caring Ministries serves is three individuals. Within these households it is common for at least one person to be working one or more jobs to make ends meet. The average annual income is \$21,000 – well below the poverty line. They have tough decisions to make every day: whether to put gas in the car, pay the rent or utilities or put food on the table. All it takes is one illness, a rent hike or even a dead battery and the family becomes food insufficient.

We have a need in our service area. Families struggle all year, but it is especially difficult to make it through the summer months. Parents can usually count on breakfast or free or reduced lunches during the school year but this is the time of year when parents have to find extra money for extra food. Our organization serves 350 families a month, and 40 percent of our clients are children 18 years old and younger.

There are many ways the public can help with the problem. The most effective way, she said, is simply donating to the food bank itself, which in turn will help the two food banks in Morgan County; Brush and Fort Morgan. We are very good at making a dollar stretch. One dollar can make four meals. The best way to help Caring Ministries for example, is to donate money to the food bank, and we can purchase more food with the money.

People who never dreamed of needing a food pantry are now in that situation. We are increasingly seeing middle class families come to us for assistance. The need continues to grow, and now is a good time for our community to step up and help support our efforts to serve those needs.

## Success Story by Pam Hernandez, Assistant Director

We first met Hannah and Nathan this summer when they came into Caring Ministries looking for shelter. Hannah has been raising her grandson since he was 3 months old. Five-year-old Nathan, like most kids his age, is anxiously waiting to start kindergarten this fall. Grandma is very proud of how well behaved Nathan is and how bright he is.

Hannah and Nathan were living on the Front Range where Hannah worked at a big box retail store. She was injured and has been waiting for a release to go back to work. They moved to Log Lane to stay with her boyfriend but eventually it didn't work out and were living in their car. Fortunately, they found food and shelter at the Caring Ministries and the Kathy Thompson Family Shelter. The support from Caring Ministries helped them get back on their feet.

Hannah has since found housing and is registered at Morgan Community College this fall. Nathan is getting ready to begin Kindergarten and is excited for school to start in August!

"It's going to make me cry thinking about where we were when we first came to Morgan County," says Hannah.

# Help Comes From All Over

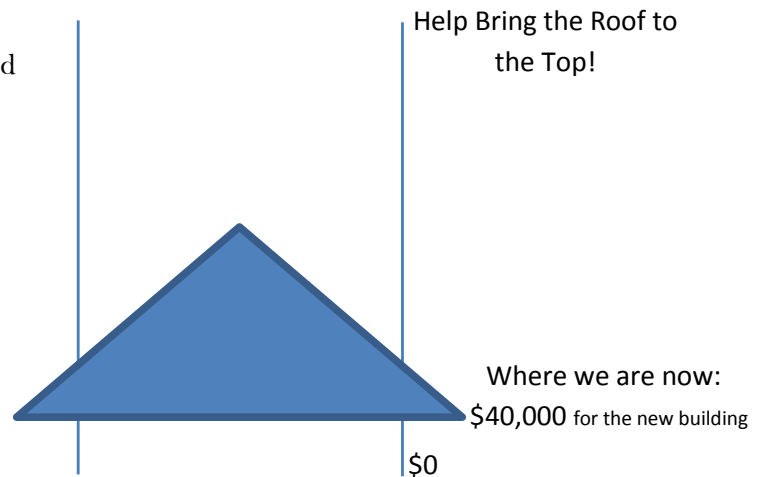
by Pam Hernandez, Assistant Director

Manual labor was the keyword for our volunteers this summer. Caring Ministries was blessed with several church youth groups of several different age groups. Projects ranged from pickups and deliveries, rearranging furniture and cleaning the thrift store to stocking shelves in the pantry. The Presbyterian Camp sent us five pre-college, college members one day to help wherever assistance was needed. They came as far away as Minnesota. The guys dug in and helped with pickups while the young ladies helped with sorting, tagging and displaying clothes. Church of Christ has assisted several times with 5-6 kids ranging in age from 14-17. They brought in sandwiches for our in-house feeding and have stayed to help in the thrift store. At the beginning of July from Hudsonville, Michigan the Bauer Christian Reform Church youth group, repainted the Kathy Thompson Shelter. Throughout the summer we have had two elders from LDS helping in the pantry once a week along with middle school students and high school students just dropping in because they didn't want to be bored. While volunteering to serve underprivileged residents and children, the youth groups have learned valuable lessons firsthand and made new friendships with volunteers from other churches.

"We have learned to appreciate everything we have and understand that it's not always about us. It's about the people we're helping and spreading the word of God," said one youth. "I will always remember this trip."



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