



**DAILY BREAD:**

Amy Pezzani, executive director of the Food Bank for Larimer County, left of door, and Chuck Gill, operations director for the food bank, right, lead the Colorado Hunger Tour through the Food Share portion of the building Thursday. Representatives from the congressional offices of four state legislators toured this and food banks in Greeley, Longmont and Colorado Springs.

Rich Abrahamson, The Coloradoan

# Tour brings hunger to the table

## Politicians' employees visit area food banks

By **MATTHEW BENSON**

MattBenson@coloradoan.com

Kitt Caylor used to be the one donating food.

Then she contracted West Nile virus last August. The illness stole the use of her legs for a while, as well as some of her eyesight. She didn't have health insurance, so her savings were sapped.

Now the 61-year-old Loveland woman is among the roughly 40,000 Larimer County residents who receive food assistance each year.

"For somebody like me who is used to being on

the other side of the table, it's very — what's the word? — emotional to have to ask for help," said Caylor, who still walks with a crutch. "I never knew what the other end looked like."

Caylor visited the Food Bank for Larimer County on Thursday, just as she does every month. A line of people stretched out the door into the afternoon drizzle, evidence of a growing local need.

The food bank saw a 35 percent increase in the people it served in 2002. In 2003, that number

### The Food Bank for Larimer County by the numbers

- Four trucks
- 100 agencies served
- 40,000 Larimer County residents served annually
- 500,000 pounds of food on hand in the food bank warehouse
- 4.3 million pounds of

food distributed in 2003

#### To donate:

Visit [www.foodbanklarimer.org/index.htm](http://www.foodbanklarimer.org/index.htm) for more information or to donate. The Food Bank for Larimer County can be reached at 493-4477.

jumped another 30 percent.

"It's a complex formula. But absolutely, the economic downturn had a lot to do with that," said Amy Pezzani, the food bank's executive director. "Local layoffs had a lot to do with that."

The need for food as-

sistance was brought into focus Thursday as part of the Colorado Hunger Tour, which included stops at food banks in Fort Collins, Greeley, Longmont and Colorado Springs.

Representatives were on hand in Fort Collins from the congressional

offices of Reps. Marilyn Musgrave, Diana DeGette, Bob Beauprez and Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell.

The high price of local housing helps drive up the need for assistance, Pezzani said, as some residents spend money on rent they'd otherwise devote to food.

But most of those who visit the food bank aren't destitute. Rather, they're people living on the margins, paycheck to paycheck. Almost any sudden setback can throw them off, such as being laid off or encountering major car trouble.

Or, in Caylor's case, West Nile.

Each year, about 500,000

See HUNGER/Page B4



Rich Abrahamsen/The Coloradan

**STOCKED:** A tour group circulates through the Food Bank for Larimer County on Thursday. The food warehouse, serves 40,000 county residents annually.

## Hunger

Continued from Page B1

Coloradoans seek food assistance — 150,000 in any given week, Pezzani said.

Locally, much of that assistance comes from the Food Bank for Larimer County. The food bank provides fresh produce, bread and other items to 100 local agencies, including churches, Catholic Charities Northern and Crossroads Safehouse.

The inside of the food bank warehouse looks like a Sam's Club. Steel shelves hold box upon box of food stacked toward the ceiling.

Some of it comes suddenly and unexpectedly, as with a recent shipment of 8,000 pounds of bananas. And some comes through exchanges with other food banks, including a recent trade for Arizona plums.

The Food Bank for Larimer County receives 10 percent of its products through local food drives, said operations director Chuck Gill. More than half comes locally, including from area grocery stores that donate products nearing their expiration dates.

Local agencies shop the warehouse for the products, and the food bank distributes some through a "pantry" service operated out of the same building.

The pantry has many of the same products you'd find at a corner grocery — fresh pro-

'I live off what I get from here. Really, it's functioning off the generosity of other people's hearts.'

**Kitt Caylor,**  
Loveland resident

duce, bread, eggs, even Clairol hair color.

And people like Caylor are grateful.

"I live off what I get from here," she said. "Really, it's functioning off the generosity of other people's hearts."

# FOOD BANK STANDS READY TO ASSIST THOSE IN NEED



Reporter-Herald/JENNY SPARKS

**A group of congressional staffers and members of the media tour the Food Bank for Larimer County in Fort Collins on a fact-finding mission Thursday as part of the Colorado Hunger Tour. The group toured several Colorado food banks.**