

Chaffee's Got Heart Community Spotlight: Chaffee County Community Foundation

The Chaffee's Got Heart Committee is extremely proud of local businesses and individuals that have gone above and beyond by doing extraordinary things during these uncertain times.

From innovating ways to thrive despite trying circumstances to showering struggling members of our community with generosity to prioritizing the health and safety of our most vulnerable, these businesses and individuals, who have been nominated for this honor by fellow community members, have shown what it really means when we say: **Chaffee's Got HEART.**

Today, we sat down with **Executive Director of the Chaffee County Community Foundation, Joseph Teipel** to learn how COVID changed the approach taken by this nonprofit founded in 2018 with a mission to act as a catalyst to inspire positive change through the power of philanthropy to enrich the lives of all people in Chaffee County.

How did COVID cause you to innovate?

COVID forced us to research, design and implement new ways of doing what we do, which included things we had never done before. Overall, it caused us to innovate in 3 big ways:

1. We had never given direct cash assistance to individuals, but COVID shifted our focus to the Emergency Response Fund (ERF). Within just a few weeks of the shut down, we worked with DHS to offer assistance that would meet the community's immediate needs.
2. By June, we created a group-based grant program for food access organizations that was new to our organization. We wanted it to be innovative and forward-thinking so we modeled it around the idea that the grantees would work together to increase coordination and collaboration to meet immediate community needs and ensure all Chaffee families and individuals had access to nutritious food.
3. Due to COVID, we had to grow our capacity very quickly. For 2020, we had a planned budget of \$80,000. Over the year, we actually ended up passing \$1.8 million through our organization. The sheer volume of dollars, transactions, grants...it all required we innovate, figure out how to do more with such a small staff, and lean on our board of directors.

Why did you decide to go above & beyond to contribute to our community?

This is our mission and who we are, but we were also driven to do more by nudges from community leaders who recognized a gap that we could fill. We were asked to step up to the plate by these other stake holders and we did.



Where do you see examples of the idea that ‘Chaffee’s Got Heart’?

The easiest example is the outpouring of generosity from across the county in response to COVID. It was clear that hundreds and hundreds of people understood the traumatic impact of the shutdown on other community members and they stepped up and got involved financially. We had 780 individual donors contribute to the ERF, many of whom had not donated to us before, for a total of \$400,000 that went straight back to our community.

What’s your biggest takeaway from 2020?

On community level, I learned that Chaffee residents have a deep desire to support each other. On a pragmatic level, I learned that it’s possible to get so much done without being around other people and that’s surprising.

Cool Tidbits:

CCCF is always trying to raise and elevate the idea of philanthropy and giving back. With new stimulus checks going out, CCCF is urging those who don’t need those stimulus dollars to leverage that money by donating it to the ERF at <https://www.chaffeecommunity.org/invest-now>.

Over the year, a total of 1.1 million came into the ERF through grants, individual donations, etc. Approximately \$700,000 went back into the community through grants to individuals, small businesses and non-profits. The rest is being held in reserve in anticipation of needs in 2021. Learn more: chaffeecommunity.org.

Stories of Chaffee County individuals and businesses rising to the challenge abound.

We will be shining a light on those doing extraordinary things for the community throughout the upcoming months. Visit our websites ([Chaffee’s Got Heart](#) or [CCPH](#)) or follow us on [Facebook \(@COVID19ChaffeeCounty\)](#) to see more.

Know a potential candidate, or are you one yourself? Send nomination ideas to: health@chaffeecounty.org.