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Grant funds food bank improvements

ALAMOSA — The headquarters for the Food Bank Network of the San Luis Valley became the first rural Colorado recipient of Energy Outreach Colorado's NEEP project (Non-Profit Energy Efficiency Program.)

This new state-wide initiative is working with a wide range of non-profit organi-

zations to weatherize and improve energy efficiency in their buildings, by saving utility dollars that can then be redirected to serve more people.

"Energy Outreach Colorado's NEEP Initiative realizes a dream for us," Food Bank Director Muck Kilpatrick commented. "They came

in and did all the work with minimal hassle to us: weatherization of the entire building as well as major structural improvements."

The work included replacing their old roof, adding much needed new insulation, garage doors and walk-in doors (adding weatherstripping), insulating their water heater and pipes, replacing old lights with energy-efficient bulbs, adding 'solar tubes' which provide light to the interior of the building without the use of light bulbs, as well as many more improvements.

Altogether, the NEEP project has contributed \$65,000 to the improvement of the Food Bank building. The improvements will significantly cut the Food Bank's energy costs, a significant expense throughout the year. Cutting these costs will drastically improve the Food Bank's ability to provide Valley families with healthy food options in their time of need.

These cost saving measures could not have come at a better time: in 2009, the Food Bank Network of the SLV provided more than 32,000 people with food - a major increase from the 26,000 people served in 2008.

In addition, the Adelante Family Self-Sufficiency

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Photo by Ruth Heide

Adelante Director Fanny Guyton, left, and Food Bank Director Muck Kilpatrick reveal a hidden treasure on the outside of the building that houses both programs on Sixth Street in downtown Alamosa. The historic arch doorway will be restored as building improvements continue.





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program will soon be joining the Alamosa Food Bank in their building at 513 Sixth Street in Alamosa. Adelante, as well as their PALS children's program, are growing significantly and with the move will be able to expand and improve their services. With the bigger space next to the Food Bank, Adelante will be able to transition more families out of chronic homelessness.

Over the last 19 years, Fanny Guyton, director of Adelante has served more than 150 families working in the two-year program. Adelante has a 78 percent success rate, that is, 78 percent of Adelante's families transition from homelessness to family stability. This is one of the highest rates in the state of Colorado. Twenty-five percent of Adelante families who have started the program have gone on to independent homeownership. Sixty per-

cent no longer receive any government assistance, and are employed in the community.

But Energy Outreach Colorado's generosity is only the beginning. In matching NEEP's contribution, the Food Bank and Adelante are looking to find other funding sources to help with interior construction on the Adelante side as well as renovating the facade of the building as well.

"We would like to have a uniform and tasteful front facade, perhaps with awnings and beautiful signage," Kilpatrick commented.

The Food Bank and Adelante, in keeping with recent upgrades to the downtown area, want to create an exterior that the community can be proud of, while staying true to the region's architectural style. Both programs want a building where families feel welcomed, where community members want to volunteer. They want to attract people to the community who are naturally drawn to a place that cares for its members. that

is proud of the organizations that try to build community.

Guyton commented, "When a community shows how it cares for others, it draws like-minded citizens to come live here. Dr. Steven and Allison Kitchen and their family, and Dentist Denise Swallow are examples of people who moved here because they saw a community that cares for its people during their visits." Allison Kitchen and Denise Swallow currently serve on the Food Bank and Adelante's Board of Directors.

Kilpatrick said, "We welcome input from our community in the design of the facade and a possible mural on our west-facing wall. With the improvements that have been completed, we have a building that is functionally sound and simply needs a cosmetic upgrade. We're excited to be in the center of downtown activity, something non-profits rarely enjoy. We know that the visibility that is coming will further our mission and build upon the concept that Alamosa is a community that cares."

