

## People

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# Thanksgiving Food Drive Feeds Low-Income Residents

Selah Hennessy | Denver

The Thanksgiving holiday, celebrated in the U.S. on the last Thursday of November is a big date, but for those with a low income, getting a traditional dinner on the table can be a struggle. In Denver, Colorado, the Volunteers of America charity is preparing a food drive to make sure those families get the food they need.

Volunteers of America helper Rodney Cunningham unloads boxes of Thanksgiving food for low-income families. He'll be getting a box himself to feed his four children and grandchildren.

"This Thanksgiving box is very important because I don't receive food stamps or anything," he explains, "so this is the only way that I would be able to get a Turkey and the other things going with it."

Cunningham and other volunteers are sorting the food into 1,500 baskets ready to deliver on Thanksgiving Day. The baskets will be filled with all sorts of tasty treats that make up a traditional Thanksgiving meal. Demand has been greater than ever this year, Cunningham says.

"One of the reasons why it's really important is because the economy is pretty bad and a lot of people have a need for extra food. They don't have any food at all."

Jim White, director of community affairs at the charity, says local residents donate the food.

"These individuals donated over 148 tons of food but it takes a huge amount of food as you can imagine to do 1,500 food baskets complete with stuffing and cranberries and pumpkin and fresh produce and then they are all topped off with a 15-pound (6.8-kilogram) frozen turkey," he explains.

Thanksgiving is not just about eating well, he adds.

"Whatever your situation is we all have a lot to be thankful for," White says. "And Thanksgiving should be viewed as a verb not a noun and what better way to give thanks than to help somebody out that you know is struggling right now."

Making sure people get a good Thanksgiving dinner is, for Cunningham, the best part of his work.

"They are very happy. They are blessed and it makes me feel good to see the smiles on their faces, you know, it's like you can see their stomach get big like they are full," White says.

And that is what drives him to keep volunteering.