How the Lunch Lizard Began

In 2015, the Western Colorado Community Foundation (WCCF) identified child hunger in western Colorado as a critical issue impacting thousands of children and their ability to learn. Working with Mesa County Valley School District 51 Food and Nutrition Services, WCCF identified a gap in summer food programs due to loss of grant funding and other financial challenges. Children who qualified for free and reduced lunch (higher than 90 percent at some schools), had no option for summer meals, facing weeks without a steady, nutritious meal.

In response to this gap in services for children, WCCF began partnering with D51 in 2015 by piloting a mobile meal program that would take nutritious meals to children, in the communities where they live and play. Over 40 percent of families who participated in one survey about summer meals stated that meal sites were typically challenging for them to get to, either due to work obligations or lack of reliable transportation. Mobile meals remove such barriers, bringing food directly to children. This is made possible through the USDA's Summer Food Service Program which began supporting mobile food trucks in 1999.

In 2015, WCCF provided D51 with a grant of $58,000 to purchase "Lunch Lizard 1.0". During the pilot summer, one food truck delivered meals to five locations in Grand Junction and Orchard Mesa four days a week, over 4,000 meals were served during the seven week pilot. In 2016, the community joined in to help feed hungry children providing funding to procure a second food truck; Lunch Lizard 2.0! The organizations listed below are principle donors/supporters to Lunch Lizard 2.0. Over 16,000 meals were served through the Lunch Lizard food trucks in summer 2016, quadrupling meals served from 2015. In 2017 and thereafter, the Lunch Lizard expanded to 9 weeks, added a third truck serving 15 stops a day totaling 25,000 meals per summer!