

# TEAM DECC 2011

Each week the DECC will feature a different DECC team member and participating nonprofit organization to highlight the wide variety of charities participating in your campaign. This Week's Featured Member and Charity:



**Melissa Maestas**  
of Technology Services for

## Denver Employees' Emergency Program (DEEP)

**DECC # 1026**  
**1437 Bannock Street, Suite 500**  
**Denver, CO 80202**  
**720-913-3200**  
<http://www.denvergov.org/deep/>

The **DENVER EMPLOYEES' EMERGENCY PROGRAM (DEEP)** was founded in 2004 by Chris Weimer, Director of the Office of Employee Assistance, to assist city employees dealing with extreme financial problems often resulting from difficult life experiences such as job loss, health problems, divorce or death.

Chris Weimer's goal was to establish a fund so that city employees could support each other through collective and collaborative efforts during times of financial distress. DEEP came to fruition when Chris found a group of other city employees who shared his commitment to establishing an emergency fund, and they partnered with Community Shares of Colorado, a nonprofit organization. This would reduce administrative costs and allow DEEP to use more of its funds to assist city employees in need.

### Making a difference in Colorado...

The DEEP Program provides grants to city employees who need emergency assistance with basic expenses, such as medical expenses (i.e. medications and co-pays), rental and utilities assistance, and it is the only program that is completely dedicated to city employees. As an example, DEEP has provided copayments for needed medications for employees who were skipping their medications due to rising healthcare costs. On many occasions, DEEP covered the cost for admissions to emergency rooms.

In spite of DEEP's tremendous efforts to raise funds, however, the needs have drastically outweighed the program's resources, and many applicants have been turned away. Currently, DEEP is able to provide medical and utilities assistance, but rental assistance has ceased due to lack of funding. Moreover, opportunities for rental assistance are directly proportional to an increase in donations made to the DEEP program. The endorsement, after making a donation to the DEEP Program, is that you are building your own insurance plan by making a tax deductible donation in the form of a grant that never has to be repaid. It is truly a win-win proposition!



### What your donation can do:

**\$1 per pay period** from one employee pays for medication co-pay or two medical prescriptions.

**\$5 per pay period** from one employee pays a utility bill.

**\$10 per pay period can:** Buy 1,182 pounds of food or enough to feed 15 families at a food bank, OR help provide a front door and kitchen sink in a new home for a needy family, OR pay for ten hours of counseling on a toll free help line.

### Thank you, Denver!

It is an honor to be part of such a wonderful organization. DEEP is a source of pride for city employees, and it is living proof of what we can do when we pool our resources to help city employees who are experiencing financial distress, and living paycheck to paycheck. The best part is that everything is confidential, there are no credit checks, the qualifications are minimal (i.e. all you need is an eviction or shut-off notice), and there are no questions asked, so long as your need is valid.

### Melissa's Story

My connection to DEEP began four years ago while I was experiencing financial hardship. Being able to support myself has always been a great source of pride, but it can also be a double edged sword, especially for a single person who is struggling to establish a career while making a living with no other means of financial support. There were many factors that contributed to my financial crisis (i.e. student loans, rent, utilities, bank loans and credit card debts, etc.), not to mention being in the midst of a national economy that has been tanking (i.e. furloughs, no bonuses or salary increases, skyrocketing medical costs).

Fortunately, DEEP, along with the help of Chris Weimer, pulled me out of this crisis when my debts seemed insurmountable. This bridged the gap and made the difference between having electricity, paying the rent, and keeping food on the table. Because of the generous donations of other city employees, I was able to keep body and soul together while keeping my pride intact. This is also what inspired me to become a donor, as I felt that it was important to give something back.