

FOOD For THOUGHT



FALL NEWSLETTER 2022

FIND's Hunger Relief Programs Keep Stomachs Full and Families Afloat through Difficult Summer Months

Back in May, we met Paola Sharp and her two-year-old son Thomas during FIND's first on-site CalFresh Resource Fair. As a single mother working full-time, she found new opportunities for her family. She shared, "It is nice to know that these resources are here in the community. We have help; we just have to look for it and not be afraid to ask."

Like many working families during the shutdowns, Paola struggled to make ends meet on unemployment, so she risked going back to work mid-pandemic while she was pregnant. Today, working and leaning on support from her mother and sister isn't enough to keep up with inflation.

"Comparing minimum wage to all the prices in general just does not add up. The food helps us save on rent, a babysitter, our car, our house, things like that."

This past summer, FIND's Kid's Summer Club provided healthy groceries to 60,000 children on average each month. The program enables kids and their families to pick up kid-friendly snacks, including yogurt, fresh produce, whole-grain cereals, and food for the whole family at over 150 distribution sites.

Our food lines increased while inflation hit a 40-year high this summer. Nearly one-third of a low-income household's budget is spent on food. According to research collected by Feeding America, families paid 10% more for groceries this year.

FIND's CalFresh Outreach Case Management program offered new approaches including the resource fair to reach those families, seniors, and individuals with low incomes in need of



extra assistance to combat soaring grocery and gas prices. By increasing sign-ups for CalFresh, the federal nutrition assistance program administered as CalFresh in California, our team could minimize the number of cars in our food lines. For every one meal FIND provides, CalFresh can provide nine meals.

With the additional support from FIND, including knowledge of new resources such as utility assistance and our CalFresh Outreach Case Management Program, Paola felt reassured she could provide for her family.

"I feel so proud of myself. Sometimes I feel guilty about having to come to the food bank and these diaper drives, but at the end of the day, I know that I put effort every day going to work. I am just trying my best, that's all I can do."

You can support more working parents and children like Thomas with nutritious food to ensure they can develop properly and flourish. **Donate at FINDFoodBank.org/donate.**



Message From CEO Debbie Espinosa

It takes a community effort to provide aid to families during the ongoing hunger crisis. Distributing over 22 million meals annually, twice our pre-pandemic levels, takes a great team and an outpouring of community support. Through countless challenges, our community has dedicated their time, skills, and ideas to ensure none of their neighbors are left behind.

Food insecurity was spiking prior to the pandemic, and now record-high inflation is tightening household budgets and expanding our food lines once again. That's why FIND invests in this community: through workforce development, referrals to financial assistance programs, and direct nutritional support.

To meet the persistent demand for food assistance while at the same time minimizing the impact of supply chain shortages and fewer food donations, FIND is paying more for food at increased prices. Additionally, bringing food donations from outside of the Coachella Valley used to cost between \$700-\$800 per truckload — now it's costing up to \$3,000 per truck because of increased fuel costs. Record-high inflation is dragging on longer than expected, leaving a lasting impact on our families.

Thank YOU for your support of FIND and our mission to end hunger today, tomorrow, and for a lifetime. You can continue to help by volunteering, donating, or advocating on behalf of the people we serve.

Debbie Espinosa,
President & CEO



FIND Provides Emergency Response to Oasis Mobile Home Park Residents Living Without Clean Water

Imagine not having access to clean water to cook, drink or bathe in your own home. That was the reality for Oasis Mobile Home Park residents who received a notice on July 1 that their water was contaminated with arsenic.

As the regional disaster response food bank for Riverside County, FIND Food Bank was called by the Fourth District Supervisor Manuel Perez's office to provide emergency relief to 1,100 individuals living on one gallon of water a day each in triple-digit heat. For five days, FIND delivered cases of water bottles, sports drinks, shelf-stable milk, and non-perishable food items to community members.

Supervisor Perez expressed his gratitude for FIND's dependability in times of emergency, "I want to thank FIND Food Bank for its immediate response to assist at Oasis Mobile Home Park and for, once again, always being there for our communities."



FIND Food Bank is equipped to provide emergency relief to anyone in need, during times of disaster such as fires, earthquakes, and a global pandemic.

Support FIND Food Bank during National Preparedness Month to ensure we can continue to meet the needs of our community in an emergency.

FIND Food Bank Staff Serve with a Purpose, Giving Back to Their Hometown

Meet Aleeah Aguilera, Special Assistant to the CEO, Programs Manager

What is your connection to the Coachella Valley?

I was born and raised here and graduated from Rancho Mirage High School. On my mom's side, I am a third-generation Coachella Valley resident. My grandma grew up in Thermal working in the agricultural fields. However, she knew she could not do that kind of strenuous work forever. At the age of 19, she found a job in Palm Springs and was the catalyst for moving her family out of Thermal. As I've gotten older, I've learned to appreciate this valley a lot more than I did before. I cherish the history my family has here. This valley has shaped me into the person I am today, and my grandma's determination has inspired me throughout the years. This valley is full of hardworking people with big dreams!

What is your role at FIND Food Bank?

I began as a volunteer after graduating from college in 2020. I was officially hired as a Community Health Worker a couple of months later. I was then promoted to Volunteer Programs Manager, and this past January I accepted a new position as Special Assistant to the CEO. Now, I oversee the development of several new programs. I am most involved in the SB 1383 program right now. FIND is serving as a designated food recovery organization and assists city partners



to ensure they comply with SB 1383-issued mandates. I help coordinate city partners, store managers, and agency partners, gathering information and reports to later be sent through the pipeline.

How are you able to help the community within your role?

I assist with developing programs that will have a lasting impact on the entire community. In the Coachella Valley, we have a high Latino population. Some Latinos only speak Spanish, struggle with obtaining citizenship status, or come from low-income households. In those situations, it's difficult to know about available community resources. Here at FIND, I can give our community hope and show them that we are here to help them get through it.

Visit the "Our Team" page on our website for more stories from FIND Food Bank's hometown staff.

September is Hunger Action Month

Wear Orange, Shop Local, Volunteer, and Advocate to End Hunger!

There are plenty of opportunities to act locally and join in the national movement to raise awareness of hunger throughout the month of September. Wear orange on Hunger Action Day, September 23, and join all nine desert cities, local businesses, and fellow community members to bring attention to the persistent issue of hunger in the United States. Find out all the ways you can take action this month at FINDFoodBank.org/hungeractionmonth.



WOW Virtual Food Drive



The Women of Wisdom (WOW) of Trilogy at The Polo Club in Indio saw how increasing prices affected families at risk of food insecurity, so they reached out to FIND in April to organize a food drive. What came next sparked a campaign to provide thousands of meals efficiently and effectively over the summer – a virtual food drive!

While we love how traditional food drives bring the community together, transporting the donated food barrels becomes a larger expense. Monetary donations are simply more efficient: FIND can bring in the most

needed items in bulk, providing four and a half meals to the community for every one can an individual donates.

The Women of Wisdom heard our concerns and ran with the idea to host a virtual food drive. After one month, the group raised over \$2,900! That donation can provide over 13,000 meals.

“Supporting FIND helps WOW fulfill its goal of supporting and giving back to our local community,” states Catherine Hayes, WOW Board Member. “Trilogy at Polo Club has many residents who are new to the Coachella Valley and WOW strives to expand their awareness of our local community and the available resources.”

FIND is lucky to have enthusiastic partners in our fight to end hunger. Contact our development department at **760-775-3663, ext. 125** to see how we can help you set up your own personal or organizational fundraiser or virtual food drive.

Visit findfoodbank.org/virtualfooddrive to learn more!

Hideaway Golf Club Members Take Action

David Byrnes and Gary Ray of the Hideaway Golf Club organized club members in 2020 to collectively raise funds to support those facing food insecurity in the Coachella Valley. In the first year, their initiative gathered 70 members of the Hideaway and raised \$77,000. This year, they gathered over 100 members to raise another \$125,000!

“I think it’s important for the community to know that members of the Hideaway recognize what’s happening in the Valley to a lot of families. The issue is food insecurity and we’re willing to step up and help,” states Byrnes.

Their donation helped provide approximately 562,500 meals at a time when gas and grocery store prices hit



a 40-year high. Since COVID-19, FIND has purchased nearly \$3.7 million of food, representing an average annual increase of more than 430% over pre-COVID years. When community groups like members of the Hideaway step up to assist FIND Food Bank, they help ensure our communities stay healthy through a prolonged crisis.

Support FIND Food Bank and you too can help feed the 150,000 adults, children, and seniors we provide with food assistance across the desert region every month.

Follow us on:   

FINDFoodBank.org

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501(c)(3) TAX ID # 33-0006007



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