

The Value Market

REFB's Non-Profit Grocery Store is Steppin' It Up!



The Value Market is more than a grocery store, it's an REFB program where our low-income neighbors can stretch their dollars, shop with food vouchers such as WIC (Women, Infants, and Children), and use CalFresh with dignity. Many of our shoppers do not realize that they are eligible for other REFB programs. The qualification process is simple, if you are low-income and/or are receiving food benefits, you likely qualify for additional help accessible in your own neighborhood.

Shoppers who make their way to the Value Market have resources to purchase food, and take pride in doing so. What they discover is that our friendly, bilingual clerks provide a safe and respectful shopping

environment without giving up selection or service. Our staff understands the stress surrounding hunger and work hard to connect each customer with the right resources to help put food on the table.



Photo: REFB Chief Operating Officer, Jean Larson, passing out nutritious food during the Value Market's Food Plaza now held on the third Saturday of each month.

Shari, Value Market shopper shares, "shopping at the Value Market makes me feel like I am participating in my life. I don't want to have to ask for help, but I'm so grateful that there is a place where I can use CalFresh without the judgment or embarrassment of needing help."

Just recently we redesigned the store layout to accommodate more shoppers and added a food preparation counter where customers can heat up a meal on the spot. We also offer two complimentary items of fresh produce and a loaf of bread. Food is a necessity, and these additional benefits improve our provision of help and make life more manageable for our neighbors in need.

Fortifying Our Emergency Response

REFB Purchases Generator to Strengthen the Safety-Net



Photo: Director of Programs, Billy Bartz, guiding the diesel generator into its new home just outside the REFB warehouse on Brickway Boulevard.

Being prepared during a disaster is critical to ensuring a strong safety net. In the event of an emergency power loss, the REFB will now be fully operational allowing us to serve our existing community, plus those in need for the first time. Our new diesel-fueled generator can run our entire warehouse, 5,000 square foot freezer and cooler, Community Kitchen, and Community Room for a full week.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Lowe's Charitable and Educational Foundation and funds raised during our capital campaign, the REFB purchased this generator to fortify our emergency response. By adding another layer of security, the REFB will be better equipped to serve Sonoma County in a disaster.

GIVE NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

Full-Plate Partners

Join the dedicated group of REFB donors who offer regular monthly gifts to support our critical work to end hunger in our community. These monthly donations help the REFB to plan and budget more efficiently, allowing us to leverage your donation to its maximum potential.

Your gifts turn hope into action. For more information, please contact Hillary Jarcik, Director of Development, at (707) 523-7902 ext. 133 or email hjarcik@refb.org.

Legacy Giving

Help us prepare for the future by including the REFB in your legacy plan. Gifts made each year through wills help end hunger today and in the years to come. By knowing your wishes, we can ensure that your intended legacy lives on through the REFB and that those facing hunger in the future will have a safety net.

THANK YOU

to our generous Annual Food & Funds Drive Sponsors!

Community serving community is at the core of what we do. Our annual sponsors provide vital resources that help us innovate and develop effective programs to end hunger in Sonoma County.

Thanks to the generous support of this year's sponsors we celebrate continued success in providing our community access to fresh and nutritious food.

Presenting Sponsor:



Champion Sponsors:



Partner Sponsors:



Supporting Sponsors: Andy's Produce, Bradley Real Estate, Westamerica Bank

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Host a Food & Funds Drive:

- Sign up online at www.refb.org
- Call 707-523-7902 ext. 114
- Email dwiley@refb.org

Make a Financial Donation:

- Online at www.refb.org
- Return the envelope delivered with your Newsfeed
- Mail a check to the REFB

Volunteer:

- Individuals and groups help sort, pack, deliver and distribute food
- Visit www.refb.org/volunteer
- Send an email to hmyers@refb.org



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Your input is welcomed and needed to help make the REFB the best it can be. Send your comments, suggestions and questions to info@refb.org or mail them to Communications at the REFB.

Winter Food & Funds Drive

Thank You Sonoma County



Photo: (L to R) Tracy Dugdale-Munez and Richard Bruns from Century 21 delivering 1,051 lbs. of food collected during the Winter Food & Funds Drive.

WE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU!

Our Winter Food & Funds Drive is the single largest community food drive of the year. From November through January, we all worked together to collect non-perishable food for our neighbors in need.

This amazing effort helps to fortify the lives of 82,000 people who turn to the REFB for help. For some, this may have been the first time they needed food, and for others hunger has haunted their path in life. Your support ensures that each person facing hunger has access to the nutrition they need to thrive.

This Winter At-A-Glance:



483,413
MEALS



303+
HOSTS



\$142K
FUNDS

Redwood Credit Union

Leader in Hunger-Relief



This year's presenting sponsor of our Annual Food & Funds Drive, Redwood Credit Union (RCU), has gone above and beyond. In the past year, RCU sent 134 employees who donated more than 260 hours at the REFB to end hunger

in our community. RCU's commitment to helping our neighbors in need spans giving financially, volunteering, and hosting REFB food drive barrels in every branch year-round. Through their leadership and philanthropy, RCU invests in making a measurable impact toward a hunger-free Sonoma County.

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REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK SPRING 2016



The Path of Produce

From Farm to Table

At the core of the Redwood Empire Food Bank's (REFB) efforts to end hunger you'll find fresh fruits and vegetables. Every piece of the nearly 8 million pounds we distribute each year is handled with care. Dedicated volunteers sort, bag, and distribute this healthy produce - preparing it for our neighbors facing hunger. Access to nutrient rich fresh produce allows children to grow up strong and seniors to experience better health as a result of improved nutrition.

More fruits and vegetables are grown in California than in any other state; yet in our own farming community of Sonoma County low-income families struggle to afford fresh produce. The REFB understands the importance of nutrition and your support helps to ensure that our low-income neighbors have access to healthy food.

With nearly a truckload of fresh produce arriving at the REFB each day, we move quickly to get this valuable and perishable commodity to our neighbors. Thanks to our partnership with the California Association of Food Banks (CAFB), we are able to acquire much of this produce for 13 cents a pound, a fraction of the market value. And, because we understand the importance of variety, we source more than 35 different fruits and vegetables each year.

As an added layer of service, the REFB is now using this produce in our nutritious hand-crafted Kitchen Collective entrées. Entrées, such as vegetarian lasagna and mushroom risotto, are provided to participants at several of our distributions along with shelf stable foods and produce. Recipients also receive nutritious recipes - encouraging creative use of the fresh produce.

The health of our community matters to us, which is why the REFB strategically sources and distributes so much fresh produce each year. More than half of all of the food we distribute is produce. This component, so vital to all of our 15 hunger-relief programs, nourishes our neighbors and cultivates a healthier Sonoma County.



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THE REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK provides food and hunger-relief in Sonoma, Lake, Mendocino, Humboldt and Del Norte Counties. The REFB is a member of Feeding America and a member of California Association of Food Banks.

Paths to Hunger The One in Six



Every week I sit down and talk with people who have come to the REFB in need of food. Each conversation begins with one simple question, "What brings you to the REFB?" The answer to that question has been something as immediate as a recent job loss or divorce, or as distant as a congenital medical condition or being discharged from the military years before.

We tend to think of, and refer to, "the hungry" as a monolith. We fortify that notion when we make statements about the REFB providing food to 82,000 people every year, or that 1 in 6 people in Sonoma County receives food from the REFB. The use of numbers depersonalizes the individuals that make up these unimaginable figures.

Through my conversations I have come to think about hunger and the people we help in a different way. I now see hunger as a circumstance in people's lives. Having never heard the same story twice, its presence (hunger) is as unique as the people who experience it.

Hunger is a situation that happens along the path of life. It's no longer about 1 in 6 people facing hunger in our community. Instead, it's about the one - and one by one we help them.

Sincerely,
David Goodman
Chief Executive Officer

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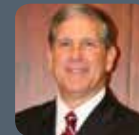
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NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Hero Volunteers One Man's Story



Volunteers make us better at what we do by sharing their time, energy and talents, and a commitment to improving the lives of others. One remarkable volunteer, Jerry Hetzer, brings his unique skillset and a lifetime of experience

to the REFB warehouse. Twice a week, Jerry leads a team of volunteers to sort donated food for speedy distribution to those in need.

At 91 years young, Jerry has been an REFB volunteer for three years. As a retired teacher and WWII Navy combat veteran, Jerry's experience mobilizing others is invaluable. Jerry keeps everyone focused on the task

Fellow volunteers often cheer at the end of a shift with Jerry, appreciating how much they were able to accomplish together.

at hand with his gentle nature and innate efficiency. Energized by the joyful productivity of a group, Jerry helps make the REFB a great place to work and volunteer.

When we asked Jerry why he volunteers at the REFB, he replied, "It's just a good place to be." It is because of Jerry, and more than 4,400 dedicated volunteers, that we are able to help the people who turn to us. By committing to serve others, together we can build a better community for everyone. Email Helen at hmyers@refb.org to learn more about volunteering.

Our Neighbors' Unexpected Journeys to Hunger Real People, Real Stories



As children we see the future as a great unknown full of possibilities. We do not dream about a path that leads us to a food line. Thanks to your support, 82,000 people who face hunger have a place to turn for help. We are all food bankers, working together to ensure that the children of today have a better world waiting for them tomorrow.

Below you'll read some of the paths that led our neighbors to hunger. We invite you to listen to their stories online at refb.org/voices.

Divorce "SOGGY CEREAL"

Recently divorced, Emily has been left to take care of her two small children without financial support. Having been a stay at home mom, Emily is now vulnerable and hasn't been able to buy groceries in over a month. Emily's path has taken a cruel turn. Without money, she is unable to arrange care for her children. And without day care, she is unable to take a job.

Desperation has forced her to get creative with food, often turning one meal into five. Her neighbor recently gave her corn flakes so that her children could eat. Emily dreads telling her kids, "This is dinner; you're eating soggy cereal because you didn't eat it all this morning and you're hungry again. All we have is the rest of your cereal." For Emily, nothing is worse than not being able to feed her kids. Because Emily was brave enough to turn to the REFB for help, she and her children will have food on the table tonight.

War Veteran "THIS IS EMBARRASSING"

At 35 years old, Jonathon finds himself a civilian after spending 12 years in the infantry. Proud to have served his country, he left the military with skills that have served him well and experiences that hinder his ability to move forward. Jonathon now copes with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Without steady employment, he and his wife are forced to raise their 1 year old son on monthly disability payments and their dwindling savings.

Jonathon understands the importance of problem solving, but the uncertainty of their future weighs heavy. Will he be able to work through the PTSD so that he can keep a good job? Jonathon shares, "This is extremely embarrassing for me. We are all just people in a small community that's a part of a bigger world and everybody needs different kinds of help at one point or another in their lives." It was difficult for Jonathon to come to the REFB for help, but his pride is no match for the love of his family. Your support relieves Jonathon of the most important question today, how will I feed my family tonight?

Injury "I'M 73 NOW"

A loving wife and homemaker is how Margaret has always seen herself. At 73, she is a widow who was able to make ends meet on Social Security. However, that changed last October when Margaret's path in life was dramatically altered by an injury. She lost her home and her safety net. She now rents a bedroom, struggles to pay bills, and has turned to the REFB for help.

Through the REFB Food Connections, Margaret was linked to a distribution site in her neighborhood where she has access to healthy food. We also helped her apply for CalFresh. And even though she'll only receive \$16 a month from CalFresh, she says, "\$16 more a month for food is a big help." Margaret is not alone; because of your support, she and more than 16,000 other seniors in Sonoma County can turn to the REFB for help.

To hear our neighbors' unexpected journeys in their own voices visit www.refb.org/voices.

Advocating for Hunger-Relief REFB Visits Capitol Hill



Photo: (L to R) Itzul Gutierrez, Becky Gershon, Jessica Bartholow, Congressman Jared Huffman, Paul Ash, Andrew Cheyne, and Heidi McHugh.

Advocating for hunger-relief is an important element of food banking. As food bankers, we accept the responsibility to be the voice of our neighbors in need and champions for change that will reduce the root causes of hunger.

In February we visited Washington, D.C. for the annual Anti-Hunger Policy Conference where we met with other food banks and national leaders to discuss federal food policies. REFB Senior Programs Manager, Itzul Gutierrez, spoke with senators and representatives about the need to protect and strengthen food assistance programs like CalFresh, and to provide better nutrition options for school children during the summer.

Get Involved

Join us in Sacramento May 25th for Hunger Action Day (HAD). To sign up, contact Itzul Gutierrez at igutierrez@refb.org or call 707.523.7900 ext. 132.

Let's Get Together For Lunch

The REFB's Summer Lunch program begins serving meals to children in need at 40+ neighborhood sites in June. Last summer with generous support from our community, the REFB's Summer Lunch program served more than 56,000 meals.

The REFB will once again partner with the Sonoma County Library System to serve lunch at locations from Sonoma to Guerneville. Offering lunch with summer reading helps children focus while learning which expands their imaginations, improves their reading skills and helps reduce learning loss.

Summer Lunch offers children relief from hunger with kid-friendly meals and fun activities that spark laughter and joy. It is a family event that encourages spending time together and coming out to meet the neighbors. Relationships formed during lunch help to build stronger communities. Thanks to a generous grant from Sonoma Wine Country Weekend, we will be piloting a summer lunch pantry and distributing fresh produce at some of the sites to offer families in need healthy groceries.

Summer Lunch kick-off week takes place June 13-17 at local park sites where children will LEAP (Let's Eat and Play) with friends, pedal their way to a smoothie, win a watermelon during the cakewalk, or join in the fun with one of many presenters offering educational entertainment for the entire family.

Learn more about our Summer Lunch volunteer opportunities online at refb.org.

SUMMER LUNCH Volunteers Needed



GET INVOLVED IN SUMMER LUNCH!

We need YOUR help making the 13th annual Every Child, Every Day Summer Lunch Program happen. Every summer the REFB offers low-income children in Sonoma County a healthy lunch during the school break. But we can't do it without you. We need volunteers to deliver and serve nutritious meals and to help supervise educational and exercise activities at the lunch sites.

Change the life of child this summer when you volunteer to end hunger in our community. Volunteer on your own or team up with friends or colleagues. All volunteers must be 18+ years old.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Maira Reynosa at mreynosa@refb.org or 707.523.7900 ext. 121.

OUR MISSION: TO END HUNGER IN OUR COMMUNITY

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