

# 2025 Impact Report



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**MEALS, NOT WASTE**

## How Local Grocers and the Redwood Empire Food Bank Turn Surplus Food Into 4 Million Meals



**THE REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK'S GROCERY RECOVERY PROGRAM** has become one of Sonoma County's most powerful tools against hunger and waste, turning surplus supermarket food into millions of meals each year. In 2025, that effort rescued more food than ever before, delivering highly desirable groceries from local retailers to families across five counties at no cost to those in need.

**A LIFELINE IN A TOUGH YEAR**

In a year marked by rising costs and strained household budgets, local grocery partners stepped up their support for the Redwood Empire Food Bank. Through the Grocery Recovery Program (GRP), the food bank rescued 4.87 million pounds of food in 2025, up from 3.74 million pounds in 2024—a 30% increase that translated to a total of 4 million meals for the community.

The Grocery Recovery Program now stands alongside other donated and purchased food as a major channel in the food bank's sourcing plan, combining rescued, donated, and purchased products. In addition to food rescued through Grocery Recovery routes, the food bank received another 5 million pounds of donated food in 2025, including contributions from many of the same retailers and manufacturers that support its recovery efforts.

**HOW GROCERY RECOVERY WORKS**

Each day, the Redwood Empire Food Bank and its partners visit local grocery stores to collect food that is perfectly good

to eat but no longer intended for retail sale. Once recovered, these groceries are quickly sorted, kept at safe temperatures, and routed either through the food bank's own distributions or directly to community partners so they reach households while still at peak quality.

**CHERISHED PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL GROCERS**

The Redwood Empire Food Bank now works with 58 grocery recovery partners in Sonoma County alone, making the food bank a go-to solution for retailers with surplus edible food. Top supporters include Costco, Grocery Outlet, Lucky, Oliver's Market, Raley's, Safeway, Sprouts, Target, Trader Joe's, and Whole Foods Market, reflecting deep relationships with nearly every major banner in the region.

These donor relationships are built on trust, responsiveness, and a shared commitment to keeping good food in the community rather than letting it go to waste.

**BALANCE ON THE PLATE, VALUE ON THE DOLLAR**

The Grocery Recovery Program brings in a wide range of

fresh, high-demand foods that add balance and dignity to the plate. In 2025, recovered product included everything from fresh produce to prepared meals (see "What's on the plate", right).

These are the same brand-name staples and fresh ingredients shoppers would find in store aisles, now available at no cost to neighbors facing food insecurity. By rescuing this inventory instead of purchasing it, the Redwood Empire Food Bank effectively stretched donor dollars by an estimated retail value of \$8.2 million in groceries in 2025 alone.

**ENVIRONMENTAL GAINS, LOCAL BENEFITS**

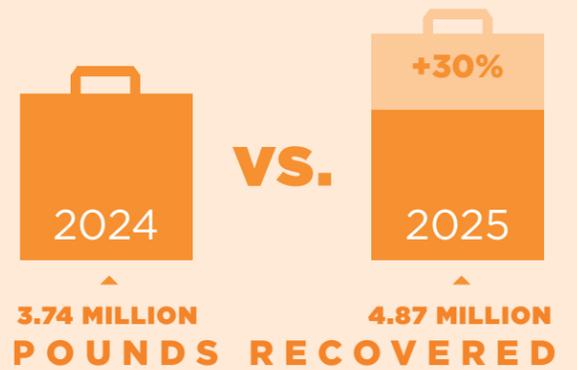
The environmental impact of saving edible food at this scale is equally striking. By preventing millions of pounds of surplus food from entering landfills, the Grocery Recovery Program helped avoid an estimated 2,400 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions in 2025—the equivalent of 1.5 million miles driven by an average gasoline-powered passenger vehicle.

The water embedded in that food—about 326 million gallons—is equal to roughly 494 Olympic-size swimming pools, underscoring the hidden resources preserved each time surplus groceries are kept in the food system instead of discarded. Economists estimate the avoided future economic damages from these emissions, often referred to as the social cost of carbon, at over \$700,000 in 2025, amplifying the impact of every pound recovered.

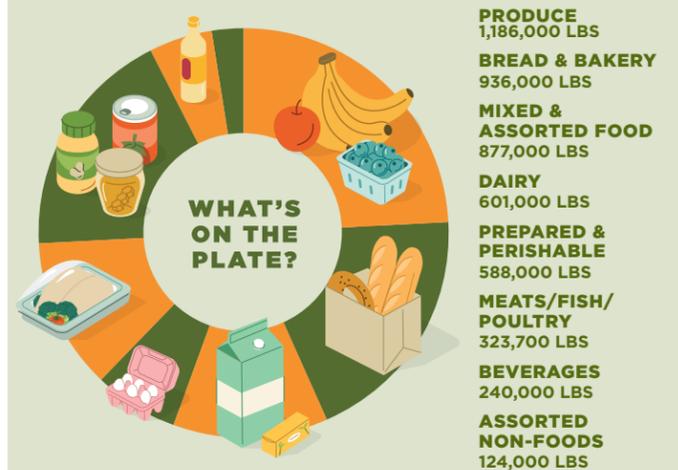


**GROCERY RECOVERY PROGRAM AT A GLANCE**

**YEAR-OVER-YEAR GROWTH**



**30% INCREASE IN RESCUED FOOD FOR A TOTAL OF 4 MILLION MEALS**



**BEYOND THE PLATE: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**



**2,400 METRIC TONS CO<sub>2</sub>e AVOIDED = 1.5 MILLION MILES NOT DRIVEN**



# After Federal Cuts, a Stronger Food Network Emerges

## FEAR AND ACCESS

### Government / Policy

- Civil-rights rules changed
- Immigration enforcement zones expanded
- Nutrition and safety-net funding under review

### Redwood Empire Food Bank / Action

- “All Are Welcome” communications
- Proxy pick-up promoted
- Staff trained on what to do during official visits
- Contingency budget planning begins

JANUARY-FEBRUARY

## TARIFFS AND USDA CUTS

### Government / Policy

- New tariffs disrupt food supply chains
- USDA trucks canceled for food banks
- LFPA (local food purchasing programs) canceled

### Redwood Empire Food Bank / Action

- LFPA + nine USDA truckloads lost; \$1.5M food loss
- Bulk purchasing to lock in prices and build inventory
- Protein/dairy moved to 2-weeks-on, 2-weeks-off
- Local, cultural produce removed

MARCH-APRIL

## CALFOOD THREAT AND WIN

### Government / Policy

- Proposed 90% CalFood (state funding for CA-grown food) reduction announced
- CalFood funding preserved

### Redwood Empire Food Bank / Action

- CalFood advocacy campaign
- CalFood helps stabilize core produce purchases
- Donor support crucial

MAY-JUNE



Page 2: Neighbors helping neighbors at the Epicenter food distribution site in Santa Rosa. Page 3: A young participant stocks up on carrots at the Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Building.

**THE REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK** has spent the past year navigating multiple shocks to the food system—tariffs, canceled shipments, and reduced nutrition funding—while keeping food flowing to neighbors and 130 partner organizations.

The result is a carefully managed, increasingly collaborative safety net that now depends more than ever on community support and regional partnerships to meet rising need across Sonoma, Lake, Mendocino, Humboldt, and Del Norte counties.

### A YEAR OF TRADE TENSIONS AND CUTS

In early 2025, the food bank saw warning signs that federal

food and nutrition support would be less stable than in past years, even as grocery prices and community need remained high. New tariffs strained national supply chains, leading to higher costs and delays. Around the same time, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) canceled hundreds of food shipments and ended more than \$1 billion in local food funding, including the Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) program.

For the Redwood Empire Food Bank, this meant losing nine truckloads of high-value USDA foods and all LFPA support. Altogether, the food bank faced an estimated \$1.5 million in food loss, forcing a

rapid reset of its food budget and distribution model.

### HOW THE FOOD SUPPLY SHIFTED

To stabilize supply, the food bank bulk-purchased key staples and increased inventory to cushion against tariffs and shipping delays. As USDA deliveries fell and LFPA funding ended, it focused on core items while pacing distribution frequency so limited dollars could reach more households.

The loss of LFPA support reduced access to locally sourced, culturally relevant produce. While the food bank still secures fresh fruits and vegetables through other channels, the variety has

declined, and fewer items come from local farms. The organization’s focus has shifted to maintaining a steady supply of nutrient-dense, versatile produce—allowing families to prepare healthy meals even with fewer protein and dairy options—though opportunities to support local growers and distinctive community foods have diminished.

### RIPPLE EFFECTS ON LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS AND DATA

LFPA’s elimination weakened an important mechanism that had tied local farmers and food banks together. In September, another blow came when the USDA ended

the long-running Household Food Security Report—the nation’s key hunger data source. The Redwood Empire Food Bank still collects its own local data but will now rely more on Feeding America’s analysis to track trends.

### NUTRITION PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Ongoing discussions about potential cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits raised widespread concern. In the five-county service area, roughly 100,000 people rely on SNAP, including over 40,000 in Sonoma County alone. Any reductions quickly translate into greater demand for emergency food.

When a federal government shutdown later delayed monthly SNAP (CalFresh) benefits, thousands suddenly lacked expected funds. That month, the Redwood Empire Food Bank and their partners saw 1,800 new families seek help, and existing clients visited more often—a clear sign of the system’s fragility.

### LOCAL RESPONSE: PARTNERS AND PREPAREDNESS

The organization’s decisions were budget-driven and guided by internal protocols that rotated foods like milk, rice, beans, and pasta week by week, while bread, produce, and donated items continued as available. Today, produce and shelf-stable foods form the foundation of distributions, with higher-cost proteins offered on alternating weeks.

Operating more than 300 of its own distribution sites each month and relying on 130 partner agencies, the

food bank also invested in partner capacity with grants, equipment, and training—ensuring a resilient network even under strain.

## STANDING BY FAMILIES AND FRONTLINE PARTNERS

During the government shutdown, the organization launched a targeted distribution for local Coast Guard families facing delayed pay, while expanding high-capacity sites to keep lines moving. It also reached

out to donors and corporate supporters, emphasizing the urgent need to fill gaps left by lost federal support.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The past year underscored how quickly policy shifts and trade measures can ripple through household budgets and local food systems. With SNAP and WIC under review and the loss of a key national data source, food banks expect continued uncertainty.

President and CEO Allison

Goodwin engaged local and state elected officials to highlight these challenges and strengthen attention to hunger relief.

Looking forward, the Redwood Empire Food Bank is planning for a future of fluctuating nutrition support, relying on timely data, strong partnerships, and careful stewardship to ensure that—despite canceled truckloads or delayed benefits—neighbors can continue to count on a dependable source of food close to home. 🌱



## JULY-AUGUST

### SNAP CHANGES AND PLANNING

#### Government / Policy

- SNAP benefit cuts move toward implementation
- WIC support under threat

#### Redwood Empire Food Bank / Action

- Plan for SNAP-related demand surge
- Food budget reworked: heavier on produce and shelf-stable items

## SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER

### SHUTDOWN AND COAST GUARD SUPPORT

#### Government / Policy

- Federal shutdown begins
- SNAP/CalFresh delay warning

#### Redwood Empire Food Bank / Action

- Plan for November spike in need
- Increase support to partner agencies
- Coast Guard-specific distribution
- Increase capacity at key sites; identify emergency-ready locations
- Board of Supervisors briefings and advocacy
- Ask donors for added support

### FOOD INSECURITY DATA ENDS

#### Government / Policy

- USDA ends long-running national food insecurity report

#### Redwood Empire Food Bank / Action

- Plan to turn to Feeding America hunger data & trends
- Use network data to target high-need areas

## NOVEMBER-DECEMBER

### SNAP DISRUPTION AND RECORD NEED

#### Government / Policy

- Nov. 1 SNAP/CalFresh benefits delayed
- Courts order release of benefits; short-term fix only

#### Redwood Empire Food Bank / Action

- 1,800 new families in one month
- Visits per household increase in frequency
- 300+ sites open; 11 high-capacity hubs identified
- Prioritizing produce and shelf-stable foods

### ONGOING UNCERTAINTY

#### Government / Policy

- SNAP and WIC debates continue
- Safety-net funding and data remain uncertain

#### Redwood Empire Food Bank / Action

- Support network of partners with grants, tools, training
- Stretch lean budget and donations to meet demand
- Plan 2026 advocacy and preparedness for continued volatility

## Redwood Empire Food Bank Strengthens Mendocino County Hunger Relief Through Support of Mendo Food Network

For years, the Redwood Empire Food Bank has played a pivotal role in building a hunger-free network across Northern California. One shining example of that leadership is its ongoing support of the Mendo Food Network—the Redwood Empire Food Bank’s affiliate food bank serving Mendocino County—which has become a powerful local force for hunger relief.

The relationship between the two food banks has evolved from one of direct service to one of strategic capacity building. When the Redwood Empire Food Bank first began working with the Mendo Food Network, the smaller organization lacked the infrastructure to fully meet the county’s growing need for food assistance. The Redwood Empire Food Bank stepped in to help—collaborating on product sourcing, improving food budgeting systems, and establishing procedures to strengthen distribution and community partnerships.

Over time, these efforts have paid off. With grant funding, technical assistance, and logistical support from the Redwood Empire Food Bank, the Mendo Food Network

has expanded its operations significantly. The organization recently opened a new, larger warehouse in Willits—an impressive facility that now serves as a central hub for food distribution throughout Mendocino County. Their original Fort Bragg Food Bank continues to operate, and together the two sites ensure that nutritious food reaches every corner of the region.

Earlier this year, the Redwood Empire Food Bank’s partnership team visited both facilities to see firsthand how far the organization has come. “It was inspiring to see their operations thriving in both Fort Bragg and Willits,” noted Amy Tobener-Talley, Director of Partnerships. “We’re so proud of how much they’ve grown and how they’re now leading the fight against hunger in Mendocino County.”

As the Mendo Food Network gained capacity, the Redwood Empire Food Bank began stepping back—allowing them to take the



lead in their local community. This transition has brought greater efficiency to both organizations: fewer long-distance deliveries, less time spent on the road for Redwood Empire Food Bank staff, and more direct service led by the Mendo team. January 2026 marks the completion of this transition, as the last Mendocino County partners officially move under the Mendo Food Network’s care.

For Mendocino County residents, the change means increased access

to local resources. The Mendo Food Network now serves as a true countywide hub—connecting people to food banks, pantries, soup kitchens, pop-up distributions, and other vital community programs.

Through partnership, mentorship, and shared vision, the Redwood Empire Food Bank and the Mendo Food Network have built a stronger, more self-sustaining system for hunger relief—one that ensures no community stands alone in the fight against food insecurity.

**“We’re so proud of how much they’ve grown and how they’re now leading the fight against hunger in Mendocino County.”**

~ Amy Tobener-Talley, Director of Partnerships



Bay Area food bank leaders gather at Second Harvest of Silicon Valley in San Jose, June 2025, where Redwood Empire Food Bank President and CEO Allison Goodwin joined peers to urge Congress to protect SNAP (CalFresh) from devastating federal cuts.

## Building a Hunger-Free Future for All

BY ALLISON GOODWIN, PRESIDENT & CEO

AS I LOOK BACK ON 2025, I'm filled with gratitude for the continued strength and compassion of our community. Each day, I am reminded that the Redwood Empire Food Bank is more than a provider of groceries—it is a lifeline, a partner, and a pillar of health and stability across our region. This year, we not only met the growing demand for nourishment but also reinforced our role as a leader in addressing the root causes of hunger.

In June, I joined fellow Bay Area food bank leaders at Second Harvest of Silicon Valley to call on Congress to protect vital hunger relief programs like CalFresh from devastating cuts—one of many efforts I undertook this year to help safeguard these critical food resources and a powerful reminder that collaboration strengthens all of our efforts to ensure food access for every community. This experience reaffirmed how essential it is for the Redwood Empire Food Bank to lead conversations, initiatives, and actions that improve access to food and strengthen our safety net systems.

Looking ahead, our focus for 2026 is to deepen our engagement with public sector partners—educating county leaders and elected officials about the vital role the Redwood Empire Food Bank plays as a cornerstone of a healthy community. We'll highlight our expansive partner network, the economic impact of our food and programs, champion culturally relevant food access for our most vulnerable neighbors, and continue to promote familiar and trusted programs such as Cal-Fresh, WIC, and universal school meals.

We will also expand educational opportunities through gatherings like our Board Reunion, Investor Briefing, Full Plate Partner Luncheon,

Second Helping Society Gathering, and Annual Gala—events designed to inform, inspire, and connect people to our mission.

Equally important is our dedication to food. Through programs like Grocery Recovery, Range to Table, and new initiatives like A Simple Gesture, we are creating innovative ways for people to join us in the effort to end hunger. As an expansion to our existing partnerships with farms that grow food (Farm to Fight Hunger, Novavine), we will pilot a new model that transforms underutilized local farmland into productive spaces to grow food for our neighbors in need—a true reflection of agriculture, community, and compassion.

And because sustainability must be part of feeding our future, our Operations team is deepening partnerships with organizations that share our commitment to reducing waste and protecting the environment. Together, we are focusing on lowering our impact on natural resources through practical, on-the-ground solutions—such as our collaboration with Conservation Corps North Bay to recycle plastic wrap from our facility and partner sites. This plastic recycling initiative is just one example of how these sustainability partnerships help us divert materials from landfills while expanding our positive environmental impact.

Together, we are shaping a future where healthy, reliable food access is a reality for all. As we move forward, I am inspired by the creativity and spirit that drive this organization—a shared belief that collective action can solve even the most persistent challenges. Every bag of groceries shared, every partnership forged, and every voice raised brings us closer to a hunger-free community. Thank you for standing with us on this journey. 🌱

## Letters to the Editor

### Gratitude From a Low-Income Senior

This is the most wonderful food giveaway that I have ever seen in my life. It has helped us in so many ways. We are low income seniors—very hard to make ends meet. We have medication money to put out. Rent goes up and PG&E gets higher. Thank you from the bottom of my heart, God Bless everyone who helps in any way.

~ *Celina R.*

### I Never Thought We'd Need Help

I never imagined I'd be in this situation again. My husband lost his job a month and a half ago—he's always been the breadwinner. I'm 60 now, and we don't have enough food or money to cover our bills. When I found out your organization could help, I broke down in tears. The kindness and support mean more than I can say.

~ *Stephanie C.*

### Depending on This Food to Survive

I'm homeless and walk a long way to pick up my groceries, so I always get there early—I depend on this food. I'm so grateful for the food bank. You remind me that there are still good people in the world who truly want to help.

~ *Sam P.*

GUIDED BY HEART, VISION, AND COMMUNITY

## 2025 Board of Directors

Behind every meal shared and every neighbor nourished stands a community of caring leaders who help guide our mission forward. The Redwood Empire Food Bank's 2025 Board of Directors generously shared their time and wisdom to ensure that our programs, partnerships, and resources continued to meet the growing needs of our community.

We are grateful to each board member for their dedication, stewardship and belief that together, we can end hunger in our region.

**David Berry**, Board Chair  
**Amy Lyle**, Board Vice Chair  
**Kathy Inouye**, Board Treasurer  
**Sheri Wenzel**, Board Secretary  
**Courtney Foley**  
**Gary Nadler**  
**George Gittleman**  
**Michael Schuh**  
**Tracy Condron** (through July 2025)  
**Troy Sanderson**

### Give the Gift of Hope All Year Long

By becoming a Full Plate Partner, your monthly gift ensures that your neighbors in need continue to have access to fresh, healthy food—every day of the year.

Keep plates full year-round at [refb.org/fpp](http://refb.org/fpp)



## 2025 Finance News

Each dollar entrusted to the Redwood Empire Food Bank in 2025 carried more weight than ever, meeting a time of heightened need and tightening resources. Through careful stewardship, every contribution became reliable access to healthy groceries and real hope for neighbors facing hunger across Sonoma County and the surrounding region.

**FOR EVERY \$1 RECEIVED, WE'RE ABLE TO PROVIDE \$3 WORTH OF HEALTHY FOOD**

**\$75.6 M**  
of Food Distributed

## 25.2 Million Meal Equivalents Provided

## 135,000 People Served

### 7,200 New Families Served This Year

Numbers reflect people served at food bank distribution sites. Excludes partner service.

### How We Deliver Food

	Food Value	Meal Equivalents
<b>Partner Network</b> <small>Food provided through partner organizations.</small>	<b>\$33.0M</b>	<b>11.1M</b>
<b>Direct Service</b> <small>Food provided through Redwood Empire Food Bank distributions.</small>	<b>\$42.6M</b>	<b>14.1M</b>

### People Power

- 13,000 Individual Donors
- 105 Major Food Donors
- 3,800 Food Distributions
- 126,700 Volunteer Hours = 60 Full-time Employees!
- 80 Staff
- 7,400 Volunteers

### Service Area

**Direct Service Area**

- Sonoma County
- Lake County
- Mendocino County

**Total Service Area**

- Sonoma County: 74%
- Mendocino County: 10%
- Lake County: 10%
- Humboldt County: 5%
- Del Norte County: 1%

Our direct operations serve three counties; primarily Sonoma. Through our 130 Hunger Relief Partners, we extend our reach to five counties.

### WHAT WE PROVIDE Nutrition Breakdown

- 50% Produce
- 33% Other
- 8% Dairy
- 9% Protein

Balanced nutrition for a healthy community.

### HOW WE OPERATE Where Funding Comes From

**\$22.5 Million**

- Individual Donations: \$11.4M (51%)
- Grants & Foundation Support: \$900k (4%)
- Other Revenue: \$5.1M (23%)
- Government Contracts: \$3.5M (15%)
- Corporate Contributions: \$1.6M (7%)

+Value of Donated Food: **\$45.9 Million**  
Above revenue reflects FY25.

### OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY Where Every Dollar Goes

- Hunger Relief Programs: **95%** of Budget
- General Operating Expenses: **5%** of Budget

Includes value of donated food.





An Oliver's Market team member invites customers to add a \$1 Holiday Bell at checkout to support the Redwood Empire Food Bank and nourish neighbors facing hunger.

## Oliver's Market Holiday Bell Campaign Continues Tradition of Giving

**Oliver's Market's 2025 Holiday Bell Campaign** once again rallied Sonoma County shoppers in support of the Redwood Empire Food Bank, raising over \$68,700 through the sale of holiday bells, additional customer donations, and company contributions. The seasonal fundraiser, now a beloved local tradition, helps the food bank provide nutritious groceries to children, families, and seniors across Sonoma County and its entire service area.

Launched in 2016, the Holiday Bell Campaign has steadily grown in support over the years, with recent campaigns surpassing tens of thousands of dollars in donations. Since its first year, the campaign has grown from under 9,000 bells sold to well over 40,000 bells sold in recent years, reflecting the community's deepening commitment to local hunger relief.

Each bell, sold for \$1 at each of Oliver's four employee-owned grocery stores, represents a direct investment in local hunger relief, and the company's matching contributions further expand the campaign's impact. Altogether, the Holiday Bell Campaign has generated more than \$320,000 in support for the Redwood Empire Food Bank since 2016.

Thanks to the Redwood Empire Food Bank's substantial buying power, every dollar raised through the Holiday Bell Campaign can help provide approximately three dollars' worth of food, turning this past year's total into well over \$200,000 in groceries for neighbors in need. The food bank reports that this support is critical to serving more than 135,000 people across Sonoma, Lake, Mendocino, Humboldt, and Del Norte counties throughout the year.

Organizers note that the Holiday Bell Campaign has grown into one of the food bank's most recognizable seasonal partnerships and a highlight of the year for Oliver's staff and customers alike. With plans to continue the tradition in future holiday seasons, Oliver's Market aims to keep "ringing in" much-needed support for local hunger relief efforts. 🍎

## Growing Solutions: Local Partnership Brings Thousands of Pounds of Fresh Produce to Sonoma County Tables



At Farm to Fight Hunger, volunteers harvest produce and collect farm-fresh eggs to help feed our neighbors in need. (Nicole Ryan Photography)

**IN ANOTHER RECORD-**breaking year, the partnership between the Redwood Empire Food Bank and Farm to Fight Hunger continues to blossom—literally. Together, the two organizations have strengthened efforts to bring fresh, locally grown, and culturally relevant produce to thousands of neighbors experiencing food insecurity across Sonoma County.

Farm to Fight Hunger, a nonprofit dedicated to sustainably growing vegetables and pasture-raised eggs for donation, provided more than 96,000 pounds of vegetables and 34,000 eggs in 2025, including over 63,000 pounds distributed directly through the Redwood Empire Food Bank and nearly 10,000 pounds delivered to the food bank's partner organizations. The rest went straight to farmworkers and their families, ensuring the harvest feeds those who need it most.

This year's crops included an abundance of tomatoes, summer and winter squash, tomatillos, peppers, greens, onions, herbs, and even culturally significant items such as hibiscus, nopales, and banana leaves used for tamales. These foods are grown intentionally to reflect and respect the local community's needs and tastes—items that are often difficult for food banks to source through traditional suppliers.

"Farm to Fight Hunger fills a unique and vital role in our food distribution network," Colin Davidson, Food Resources Manager, from the Redwood Empire Food Bank said. "They grow with purpose—providing fresh, nutritious produce that's locally grown and culturally relevant. It's an incredible example of how community partnerships can close the gap in food access."

Despite narrowly missing their summer crop goal of 50 tons—

harvesting 48.5 tons instead—the team at Farm to Fight Hunger sees the year as a triumph. With six farm sites in operation throughout 2025 and plans to expand by another two acres in 2026, the organization continues to grow both in acreage and in impact. A robust winter crop is already in the ground, promising continued bounty through the colder months.

Beyond growing and donating food, the collaboration between Farm to Fight Hunger and the Redwood Empire Food Bank is expanding into new areas. In 2025, the food bank helped support Farm to Fight Hunger's volunteer program by providing volunteers to assist with gleaning and harvesting—further increasing the amount of fresh produce available to the community.

Working alongside more than 130 nonprofit and faith-based partners across the region, the food bank relies on partnerships like this to ensure its distributions are not only consistent but also nourishing and diverse. Together, these organizations are strengthening a community-based food system that supports both people and the planet.

As Farm to Fight Hunger founder Bruce Mentzer and his team prepare for another growing season, their mission remains simple yet powerful: to fight hunger by farming for good. Every seed planted and every egg collected brings the Redwood Empire Food Bank and its partners closer to building a healthier, more equitable Sonoma County—one harvest at a time. 🍏



**"Farm to Fight Hunger fills a unique and vital role in our food distribution network."**

~ Colin Davidson, Food Resources Manager

## A Simple Gesture Makes Giving Easy

TOWARD THE END OF 2025, the Redwood Empire Food Bank partnered with A Simple Gesture, a community-based food donation program that makes giving easy for Sonoma County residents. With support from Redwood Credit Union, the initiative offers a simple way for neighbors to donate shelf-stable food right from their doorsteps—helping ensure access to nourishing groceries across the region.

Participants register online, set aside non-perishable food, and place it outside on designated pickup days. Volunteer drivers collect the donations and deliver them to the food bank or its partners for local distribution.

Originally founded in Paradise, California, by Jonathan Trivers and his wife Karen, A Simple Gesture began as a local effort to make food donations simple and accessible. In Sonoma County, former food bank board member Mark Martin-dill introduced and funded the

program locally, developing a new online platform that connects donors, volunteers, and pickup routes. He now hopes to expand this model nationally, making it easier for communities everywhere to adopt the doorstep-donation approach.

Redwood Credit Union's financial support and outreach helped establish the program as a true community collaboration. The first two collection days—November 8 and December 13—brought in impressive results, with generous community participation and strong early response setting a positive foundation for future collections.

As the partnership moves into 2026, plans include expanding participation and volunteer involvement. By combining technology, community spirit, and simple acts of generosity, A Simple Gesture is helping build a stronger, more resilient local food system.

Learn more or sign up at [refb.org/asg](http://refb.org/asg) 🍏



**“Our people care deeply about the mission, about one another, and about the community. That shared commitment keeps us moving forward, no matter the challenges.”**

*~ Patty Striniste, Chief People & Culture Officer*

Standing strong in orange for Hunger Action Day! Our team is united against hunger and proud to support our neighbors facing food insecurity. Together, we can make a difference—one meal, one act, one day at a time.

## Food Bank Named a Best Place to Work!

The Redwood Empire Food Bank has been named one of the North Bay's Best Places to Work for 2025 by the North Bay Business Journal, recognized for its strong workplace culture and mission-driven team. The honor, also highlighted by the North Bay Leadership Council and The Press Democrat, celebrates the food bank's focus on supporting both its staff and the community it serves.

At the heart of this recognition is a culture grounded in purpose. Staff are deeply committed to ending hunger in Sonoma County and beyond—stepping outside their official roles when needed to ensure no one goes without food. In times of crisis, employees adapt quickly and work together to keep food flowing to those who need it most.

“Being recognized as one of the best places to work means a lot to us,” said Chief People & Culture Officer Patty Striniste.

Community members and peers across the North Bay business community have extended their congratulations, recognizing the Redwood Empire Food Bank as a place where purpose and people thrive side by side.

## CHAMPIONING TRIVIA AND ENDING HUNGER The Food Bank's Jeopardy! Winner, Trey Hart



Trey Hart, Grant Writer at the Redwood Empire Food Bank, stands with host Ken Jennings after winning on the popular quiz show “Jeopardy!” in an episode that aired Friday, Dec. 12. (Sony Pictures Television)

THE REDWOOD EMPIRE Food Bank grant writer Trey Hart recently brought his quick thinking and calm under pressure from the office to the national stage, winning as a champion on Jeopardy! and giving North Bay viewers a hometown hero to cheer for. His colleagues are thrilled to see a member of their own team step behind the podium and showcase the same sharp mind and heart for service that he brings to the fight against hunger every day.

At the food bank, Trey is known not only for crafting

compelling grant proposals that help keep essential food programs running, but also for being the voice and energy behind Tap Out Hunger, the organization's lively trivia nights hosted at local breweries. As the regular host of Tap Out Hunger, he blends deep knowledge with a playful spirit, turning trivia into a welcoming way for neighbors to come together, support hunger relief, and have fun while doing good.

Seeing him win on Jeopardy! feels like a natural extension of who he is at the Redwood

Empire Food Bank: thoughtful, curious, and committed to using his talents to uplift others, whether through a well-written grant, a perfectly timed trivia question, or a confident response in the form of a question on national television. His Jeopardy! victory has become a proud moment not just for Trey, but for staff, volunteers, and supporters across Sonoma County who see in him a reflection of the intelligence, generosity, and community spirit that fuel the mission to end hunger close to home. 🍏





## Business

### Growing Solutions: Local Partnership Brings Fresh Produce to Sonoma County Tables

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(Sony Pictures Television)

## Community

### Championing Trivia and Ending Hunger The Food Bank's Jeopardy! Winner

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2025 Impact Report



# Food 8



A peek behind the scenes as Chef Don Nolan (and fellow volunteers) prepare delicious dishes for the Savor the Mission event.



## Brazilian Cheese Bread (Pão de Queijo)

This is a gluten-free recipe the food bank prepares for the community and as an appetizer for donor events.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup tapioca flour
- ½ cup milk, room temperature
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- 1 large egg, room temperature
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- ¼ cup shredded cheddar cheese

### DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. In a blender or food processor, combine tapioca flour, milk, oil, salt, and egg. Pulse until smooth.
3. Add cheeses and pulse just a few times to incorporate.
4. Lightly grease a mini muffin pan.
5. Fill each cup halfway to allow room for the bread to puff up.
6. Bake for 15-20 minutes, or until golden and crisp on the outside. (Check at 15 minutes - baking times may vary.)
7. Let the rolls cool in the pan for a couple of minutes, then transfer to a bowl. Serve warm and enjoy.

## Food Bank Hosts Second Annual “Savor the Mission: A Taste of Partnership”

THE REDWOOD EMPIRE Food Bank welcomed supporters once again for its second annual Savor the Mission event, held on October 1, 2025. This year’s theme, “A Taste of Partnership,” celebrated the critical relationships that make the organization’s work possible—bringing together local farms, food producers, and community partners in a vibrant evening of connection, flavor, and impact.

Guests gathered in the food bank’s Santa Rosa warehouse to enjoy chef-prepared bites by Executive Chef Don Nolan and a dedicated team of volunteers, crafted using ingredients by the very partners being honored. The menu

featured gourmet tastes from Point Reyes Cheese, Costeaux French Bakery, Farm to Fight Hunger, Zoe’s Meats, Mycopia Mushrooms, and Oliver’s Market, with highlights including Sonoma lamb skewers with harissa yogurt, kale and cheese borek, and artisan breads paired with local cheeses and spreads. Complimentary wine and beverages accompanied the passed hors d’oeuvres, creating an inviting and celebratory atmosphere.

Throughout the evening, guests were encouraged to “taste the partnership” by engaging with partner stations showcasing each organization’s contribution to the fight against hunger. Attendees col-

lected stamps on a punch card to complete the journey—earning entry into a drawing for a special Food Bank Family Dinner—Farm Style, an exclusive, chef-prepared dinner for 20 hosted on-site.

Leadership remarks highlighted the power of collaboration and the intricate logistics behind delivering fresh, healthy food across five counties. Donors and partners heard first-hand how their support fuels food support, ensuring thousands of nourishing meals reach neighbors in need every day. The event underscored a message at the heart of the food bank’s mission: the fight against hunger depends not only on food,

but on people—farmers, food manufacturers, retailers, volunteers, and donors—working in harmony.

As the evening concluded in a spirit of gratitude and purpose, guests walked away with a deeper understanding of how their contributions sustain one of Northern California’s most vital hunger-relief organizations. Building on this year’s success, the Redwood Empire Food Bank plans to continue the Savor the Mission series in 2026, each event focusing on a different facet of its operations and offering an ever-closer look at how partnership and generosity nourish the community. 🌱

## Leave a legacy that feeds hope.



Join the Second Helping Society and ensure your compassion nourishes neighbors for generations to come.

See how a simple gift in your will can expand outreach, strengthen our programs, and build a hunger-free future: [refb.org/plannedgiving](https://refb.org/plannedgiving).

