This year the REFB expanded its provision of help, with a focus on assistance to people who were positioned between the need for emergency food and self-sufficiency. Two programs in development were the Value Market and Food Connections.

The non-profit Value Market remains on the forefront of hunger relief in the world of food banking. The increased patronage of the store confirmed our belief that low-income people benefit from a place where they can find good prices, great quality, and superior customer service—all in a dignified environment. Our customers express their pleasure with the Value Market and appreciation for the added bonus of receiving program referrals to access additional food when the need arises.

The most gratifying feedback came when customers said, “Thank you for being here.”

During the year we worked with the county in preparation for our Food Connections Program that will navigate income qualified individuals through the government maze that leads to CalFresh. Our hope is that the CalFresh benefits will be sufficient for families to avoid having to come for emergency food provided by the REFB.

In 2015 we look forward to improving our provision of help. We will endeavor to improve the quality and quantity of food, enhance our service to our customers (clients and partners), and to better engage our donors and volunteers, who encourage us every day to end hunger in our community.

David Goodman
Executive Director

David Guhin
Board President
DISTRIBUTING FOOD FOR 12,109,148 MEALS

1 in 6 face hunger in Sonoma County

$1 = 2 MEALS

82,000 People Served Monthly

44% Children
14% Seniors
16% Working Families

52% of all food distributed is fresh produce

diabetes wellness boxes delivered monthly

SUPPER PROGRAM
303,253 meals provided to children in need

4,200 VOLUNTEERS = 40 EMPLOYEES
DONATED 80,000 HOURS

Sources of Food:

74% Donated
19% Government
7% Purchased

of all food distributed is fresh produce

303,253 meals provided to children in need

4,200 VOLUNTEERS = 40 EMPLOYEES
DONATED 80,000 HOURS

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Ending hunger in our community isn’t only about providing food to those who face hunger. It’s about improving the health of our community through access to nutritious foods and education. A strong community is only possible when our neighbors have enough healthy food to eat and the knowledge to make healthy decisions.

Last year we distributed over 14.5 million pounds of food, half of which was fresh produce. It’s no secret that nutritious food is expensive, making it harder to access for the low-income people we serve. Distributing items like protein, produce and dairy helps break down barriers to good health for many in our community.

The road to good health can’t be achieved with access to food alone, which is why the REFB offers a variety of nutrition education components through several of our programs. One example is the Megan Furth Harvest Pantry, where coordinator Alfonso Alarcon (pictured above), conducts weekly nutrition lessons. These lessons are filled with interactive curriculum to engage participants and teach them the important role a proper diet plays in reducing the risk of childhood anemia. Additionally, Alfonso encourages physical activity for the children and parents by tracking their progress through an activity goal card and even conducting ZUMBA lessons at the distributions.

Food and nutrition education go hand-in-hand and to better serve the community we will continue to offer both. We look forward to enhancing the provision of healthy food and nutrition education in the years to come.

It can take 3 to 15 exposures to get a child to try a new fruit or veggie.
INCREASED CAPACITY

The REFB’s ability to achieve our mission is dependent on our fleet of delivery trucks. These workhorse vehicles make it possible to acquire loads of food from all over Northern California and distribute this essential source of nutrients to our neighbors in every corner of Sonoma County.

Last year we faced a dilemma – our current fleet was at capacity and we couldn’t deliver additional food to those in need. The generous guests at our annual Empty Bowls event stepped in to help. During the Fund-A-Need portion of the auction they raised their paddles and pledged to help buy us a new tractor and trailer combo – a vehicle that is already being put to good use.

This truck makes it possible to distribute the food equivalent of 25,000 meals each day. And, because the trailer is refrigerated, we are able to deliver perishable foods such as yogurt, milk, cheeses and meats across Sonoma County.

Delivering food to 82,000 of our neighbors each month requires a fleet we can count on. David Goodman, Executive Director, shares that “this truck has made it possible to more efficiently distribute greater quantities of fresh food to thousands of people in our region facing the severe risks associated with hunger.”

Our ability to get food to those who need it most is at the core of our mission to end hunger in our community. This truck makes it possible to better serve our community for years to come.

Healthy food access is crucial to ending hunger in our community.

DELIVERS
31,000 LBS OF FOOD PER LOAD
EVERY CHILD, EVERY DAY

Cultivating healthier communities starts with our children. The REFB’s Every Child, Every Day initiative has seven unique programs, all designed to help ensure children have enough of the nutritious food they need to thrive. In addition to offering supplemental food or prepared meals, many of these programs also offer nutrition education, fun activities to get kids moving and food tastings to introduce new and healthy options to their developing palates.

We know that low-income children often don’t have access to enough of the nutritious food their developing brains and bodies need. This lack of nutrition can lead to anemia, weight related diseases, nutrient deficiencies and a decreased ability to problem solve and focus while in school. Last year, you helped the REFB serve more than 36,000 children each month – providing healthy and nutritious foods so they could avoid these detrimental side effects of hunger.

These programs work to create a foundation for success. When children have enough to eat they have better memory recall, verbal fluency and creativity. During the school year, the Supper Program served 303,253 meals to students, bridging the gap between their school lunch and their next meal. When school lets out for summer recess, the Summer Lunch Program fills the gap by serving more than 2,000 meals each day.

Your support ensures that the building blocks to a healthy life are in place and that the children in our community have the nutritious foods they need to succeed.

**HELPS**

36,200 KIDS EVERY MONTH

**Nutritious food is essential to the academic success of a child.**
Since 2011 we’ve been working diligently to understand the connection between food insecurity and chronic health issues, like diabetes. We’ve partnered with UCSF to conduct a 3 year study, collecting data at our DWP sites, interviewing and tracking hundreds of participants who are low-income and have, or are at risk of having, diabetes.

While the full findings won’t be published until this summer, we do have some preliminary findings that show the important role this program is playing in our community.

During the study period we found that the majority of participants experienced at least a 1% reduction in their HgbA1c levels (blood sugar levels over 2-3 months) when they participated in the DWP. This equates to a 40% reduction in the risk of diabetes related complications – such as heart disease, blindness, nerve damage and kidney disease.

We’ve screened thousands of people since 2011 and have found that a real barrier to a healthy life is rooted in poverty. The study results reveal that 44% of participants are very food insecure and 40% are mildly food insecure. These profound findings show a direct correlation between poverty and poor health management.

Thanks to you, we will continue the work that successfully connects participants with nutritious food, information and support. As this program continues to grow, we look forward to increasing our impact for this vulnerable population, empowering them to take control of their health.

DISTRIBUTED 4,957 DWP BOXES IN 2014
YOUR GENEROSITY MAKES ENDING HUNGER POSSIBLE

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Mike and Suzy Marzalek
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Mark and April Heemer
Sandra Heft
Johann and Gloria Heinzi
Kaye Henzinger
Gerald and Joan Herzog
Jeremy and Joan Hewes
Carol Hinte
Len and Jenny Hirschki
Thai and Cynthia Hoang
Maggie Hohle
Gary and Karen Holm
Robert and Zenia Horning
The Redwood Empire Food Bank provides food in Sonoma County and for hunger relief organizations in Lake, Mendocino, Humboldt and Del Norte counties. The REFB is a member of Feeding America and the California Association of Food Banks.
OUR MISSION: TO END HUNGER IN OUR COMMUNITY

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

We apologize for any errors or omissions. Please call 707.523.7900 ext. 133 for assistance, information, or corrections.