

Our Recipe for Success

Take

one vision of how things can be made better.

Add

three very generous foundations.

Mix

with the energy and enthusiasm of scores of volunteers.

The result is a faster, more efficient way to sort donated food.

We wanted to move donations from food drives and grocery stores quickly and efficiently through the process of inspection, sorting and boxing in order to make food available as soon as possible to the people, who need it most. Large donations and food drives - such as last year's holiday food drive bringing in over 100,000 pounds of cans and boxes or May's National Association of Letter Carriers food drive bringing in over 49,000 pounds of donated food in one day - can overwhelm our volunteer groups who must check each can and box, then sort and pack by type!

Our answer to this challenge was an automated conveyor belt system to speed up the handling process, making the task of sorting food less physically stressful for our volunteers, many of whom are senior citizens.

We shared our vision with three funders: Hedco Foundation, St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation and the Bothin Foundation. All three recognized this project as a valuable tool in the fight to end hunger and became partners with the REFB to make it happen.

In May, our new conveyor system was ready for operation. Our volunteers are now able to move food in record time - which means that more food is getting out to those who need it and less is sitting in our warehouse!

Supporting Partnerships

By David Goodman, Executive Director

Each morning, the 18 staff members of the REFB come to work with the mission of building partnerships to end hunger.

In the last five years, the REFB has increased its food distribution from 2.5 to 6.6 million pounds of food annually. This year, we have set the challenging goal of distributing 8 million pounds of food, the equivalent of 6.4 million meals.



Every Tuesday and Friday, Senior Gleaners sort and pack utilizing the new conveyor sortation system.

What Can I Do?

- Organize a food drive.
- Volunteer.
- Fill up our Press Democrat holiday food bag.
- Donate.
- Help a family in need find food by calling REFB.
- Advocate.
- Open a food pantry in your church.
- Educate.

Supporting Partnerships (continued from Page 1)

As our recent hunger study confirmed, our increase in service is primarily due to the ever-increasing cost of living in Sonoma County. When you are earning minimum wage, it now takes 3.4 full-time jobs in order to afford the average 2-bedroom apartment. Of the households we serve, nearly 52% of their income is spent on rent or mortgage. And a job is no guarantee against hunger – 45.6% of the people we serve who are working often run out of food. Sonoma County has officially joined the rest of the Bay Area as both an exceptional place of beauty, and an exceptionally expensive place to live.

We can not accomplish the enormous task of providing food to more than 42,000 people each month by working alone. Our partners are as diverse as the people we serve, as they include corporations, religious organizations, foundations, local, state and federal governments, and individuals. The support they provide comes in many forms, from food and financial donations, to volunteerism and in-kind donations. Each contribution - big or small – is vital to our ability to serve people living with hunger in Sonoma County.

It is difficult to highlight just a few partners, as so many give so much. So, consider these stories as a small sample of the generosity that builds the partnerships to end hunger.

- This past week we received an unexpected donation for \$5,000 from a couple who live in Santa Rosa.
- One donor has been quietly supporting the REFB for the past 10 years. We have attempted to publicly recognize him for his generosity, but he prefers to remain anonymous. He has contributed more than \$22,000.
- The Chalone Wine Group donates wine boxes that are used for our programs that serve seniors and children. Last year, their in-kind contribution saved the REFB more than \$23,000.
- Each year for the past eleven years, a Cloverdale couple makes an annual donation of \$20.
- Cisco Systems, Inc. and its staff have contributed more than \$200,000 during the past 3 years, and created the Cisco Fellowship Program paying two employees to work for REFB for a one-year period.
- The California Department of Education responded to our expansion of services to children by funding additional storage racking that increased the capacity of our warehouse by 54%.
- Our legislators who represent us in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., have made significant contributions through their legislation. They make our job easier by understanding hunger issues, and doing all they can within the confines of the political process to pass legislation that will improve the lives of the people we serve.
- Amy's Kitchen, a local food company that produces vegetarian meals made with natural and organic ingredients, is a regular donor to the REFB. They take the time to pack their donations in smaller, food-bank friendly boxes. Their efforts make distribution to our clients easier, and allow us to share their generosity with neighboring food banks.
- And finally, there are the volunteers, without whom not a single meal would be served. The REFB and our community benefits from more than 67,000 hours of volunteer time each year, as they distribute bags of groceries, pack boxes, sort food and so much more.

Hunger cannot be ended by working alone. Rather, ending hunger in our community requires diverse support, whether it comes in the form of food and financial donations, volunteerism or in-kind donations. There is one thing of which we are certain - each of us must do something to address the issue of hunger in our community. It is through building partnerships that we will end hunger.

Did You Know?

Bananas are the most popular fruit in America beating out homegrown favorites - apples and oranges. In addition to their potassium rich goodness, we really appreciate the sturdy boxes they come in. One look around our warehouse and you'll see hundreds of banana boxes holding everything from donated cans to freshly bagged frozen peas, and, of course, bananas.

Meet our new Volunteer Coordinator, Jim Roessler

Last year 67,000 volunteer hours were logged in at REFB by more than eight hundred volunteers. That's the equivalent of 32 full-time staff and an awful lot of people to recruit, but we're pretty sure Jim Roessler is up to the task. "It's wonderful to be of service to others," Jim exclaims as he helps hand out 40 pound boxes of food to senior citizens at a distribution in Santa Rosa.

Of course as much as he may like to, Jim can't do it all by himself. He is charged with finding volunteers, especially in the corporate community who can give a few hours each week or month to pack boxes, bag fruit or help out at distributions.

Jim comes to the job naturally serving in the past as a Lutheran Pastor with congregations in California and Mililani, Hawaii. After twenty years of supporting, training and working with volunteers, Jim says, "People are wonderful. They are amazing in their willingness to give of their time and energy."

In addition to the church, this father of three grown sons has been active with the Life Training Program, an educational, personal growth, non-profit. Does he ever have time for other activities? Jim loves to play handball, run, read and go to the movies with his wife, Joyce. They have recently bought a house in Rincon Valley and plan to never move again. That's good news for REFB and all our volunteers!



Jim Roessler believes, "people love to give of their energy in support of important services. This is just the place to provide the real 'soul food' people are wanting."

All the How-To's of Food & Funds Drives

With the holidays fast approaching, we think the best way to put on the pounds is to give to those in need. This year, our goal is to collect 125,000 pounds of food and \$140,000 in funds. With your help, we can do it.

Here's why Food & Funds Drives are so vital to REFB:

1. The food you donate creates a 97,656 meals for people in need.
2. Over 120 charitable organizations throughout Sonoma County use the food you donate to feed 42,000 people each month.
3. With the funds you donate, we are able to truck in food and nutrient-rich produce from all over California, making it possible to distribute \$7 of food for every \$1 we spend.
4. We'll help you organize a Food & Funds Drive for your business, community group, school or church by providing coordination assistance and support materials. Get started by contacting Food & Funds Coordinator, Lee Bickley at 523-7900 x 15 or by downloading our complete Food & Funds Drive Kit at www.refb.org. We'll even supply the grocery bags.



The team from State Farm Insurance labels tomato sauce during United Way's Day of Caring.

Teamwork is the name of this corporate game

What happens when you challenge two cutting edge technology companies to a duel of packing proportions? You get a lot accomplished! It all started with a friendly challenge to see whose team of twenty could pack up 240 boxes of food the fastest. Cisco or Intuit? Both teams amazed us completing their task in well under 2 hours.

Not to be outdone, Fireman's Fund brought in 46 employees on September 11 for 6 hours of steady work on one of the hottest days of the year.

For United Way's Day of Caring, we hosted enthusiastic volunteers from State Farm Insurance and Redwood Credit Union. Their challenge? To label as many cans of tomato sauce as possible. Asked later about her volunteer experience, Ruth Didonna Taylor replied, "It was so much fun, both fulfilling and satisfying to be a part of a group that enjoys doing volunteer work that contributes to a worthy cause. I can't speak for everyone, but I'll do it again."

Doing it again is exactly what employees from Alcatel and Exchange Bank do, coming in on a regular basis to pack, bag, sort and box whatever we put in front of them. We're incredibly thankful to all our supporting partners from corporations throughout Sonoma County. It's what helps keep us in business.

If you'd like to organize a corporate volunteer event, call our Volunteer Coordinator, Jim Roessler, at 523-7900 x 23. v
Shop 'til you drop with Macy's "Thanks for Sharing"

Contribute to your community and earn credit on your Macy's purchases. From October 15, 2003 to January 10, 2004, with a \$25 enrollment charge, you will earn 10% Rewards on almost all purchases you make at Macy's Santa Rosa Plaza and Coddingtontown stores or through macys.com. Ten dollars from each enrollment charge will be donated to REFB plus, you'll receive your Macy's Rewards card in an amount equal to 10% of the qualifying purchases in March 2004. Last year, thanks to Macy's and their generous customers, Macy's More Community, raised over \$18,000. v

Supporting Partnerships: It takes the efforts of many working together to achieve our goals

Nowhere is our theme of supporting partnerships more apparent than in the interaction of REFB with its member agencies, the clients they serve and the volunteers who help make it all work.

The Agency

Catholic Charities has been vital to the success of the Redwood Empire Food Bank since its inception in 1987, when it was awarded one of the original four seats on our Board of Directors. Today, Catholic Charities is our largest participating member agency, shopping for 276,073 pounds of food last year. Food is distributed through a variety of programs like the Rural Foods Project, which currently operates 12 sites throughout the county and a 13th in Middletown. As Program Director Sister Kathleen McGrath explains,

Rural Foods wouldn't exist without the food bank. Where would we get the food? Catholic Charities couldn't afford to serve everyone in need, otherwise. REFB is our single source for fresh produce, as well as items like yogurt, rice and beans.

Sister Kathleen's biggest fear is not being able to meet the growing need. "We are seeing an increase in 'situational homelessness' – homelessness not related to drugs or alcohol, but to a sudden change in circumstances."

She sites the rising cost of housing as one of the biggest problems facing her clients. To meet one aspect of this increasing need, Rural Foods opened 4 new sites last year to feed migrant farmworkers in Sebastopol, Fulton, Graton and Boyes Hot Springs. The program grew so quickly that by July and August, a total of 10,103 migrant workers were being served.

The Client

In the packet describing the work of Catholic Charities is a snapshot showing an older man squatting in front of a makeshift campfire tending a pot of beans. An array of bamboo poles and stray bits of canvas form a lean to, his fragile attempt at establishing home. Stacked in the corner of the frame are assorted cans and a sack of rice. A small cooler, too small to hold the perishables sticking out the top, completes the "kitchen" of this typical migrant worker camp.

Homelessness is not the only reason one seeks food. Often just one unexpected bill, a car repair or medical emergency - can mean the difference between feeding your family or not.

The Volunteers

The work of REFB and its member agencies would not be possible without volunteers like Allen MacKenzie who divides his time between Catholic Charities and the Catholic Worker. It didn't take long for he and his wife Margaret to fill up their days volunteering when they moved here from New York in 1997. When he lost his beloved wife of 51 years, Allen filled even more of his time with volunteering. After speaking with Allen, you realize that the people he helps help him as much, in return.

"It's the psychic remuneration of volunteer work that is so incredibly valuable to all of us," Sister Kathleen explains.

In Allen's case, it was a lifetime of hard work spanning 5 different careers from the corporate world to developing reproductions of Delft china for Colonial Williamsburg that prepared him for his current work. "Today, this is my career," says Allen. "I love the camaraderie of my fellow volunteers. Everyone does everything, from picking up the food to emptying the garbage." Asked about his experience at REFB, his enthusiastic reply, "I was astounded by the wonderful availability of produce, potatoes, fresh fruit like pears, nectarines, even plumcots. This is so much better for our clients than some of the less nutritious food we get."

We hope this helps put a human face on the statistics we so often cite:

- Catholic Charities is one of 120 participating agencies that shop at REFB.
- 42,000 people are served each and every month.
- Allen McKenzie is part of a force, thousands strong that allows REFB and its member agencies to help feed the hungry in Sonoma County.



Catholic Charities' Food Service Coordinator, Jim Byrne, hauls a bag of potatoes to his shopping cart in REFB's warehouse.



Volunteer Allen MacKenzie was inspired by Social Activist, Dorothy Day, who believed we all need to be responsible for our neighbors whether we know them or not

Supporting Partnerships: Introducing the Community Pantry Network

The loss of jobs coupled with the high cost of living in Sonoma County leaves many working families in Sonoma County struggling to make ends meet. The 2000 U.S. Census and the REFB 2003 Hunger Study identified that the current level of assistance offered by government and private food programs is not adequate to meet the needs of low-income working families.

“When people are struggling with rent, rising utility rates, medical costs and other bills, food is usually the last item on the list,” said David Goodman, REFB Executive Director. “Many food pantries in the county allow people to come only once a month, even though the amount of food they distribute is barely enough to feed a family for 3 to 4 days. This leaves a huge gap in the safety net for these families.”

Working to fulfill its mission of building partnerships to end hunger, REFB has established the Community Pantry Network (CPN) to increase the amount and availability of food resources for low-income individuals and families within their local community. In partnership with non-profit and faith-based organizations throughout Sonoma County, REFB is hoping to create a vital network of weekly food pantries providing 20 pounds of food per household.

“Our hope is to find volunteers and organizations who will commit to opening weekly food pantries and providing families with free groceries,” explains Goodman. “Alone, REFB cannot meet this urgent need. We must depend on our partnerships.”

According to Jean Larson, REFB Deputy Director, “the development of CPN will benefit communities for years to come. We’re working closely with participating pantries to provide food delivery, as well as technical assistance in areas such as food handling, outreach to clients, volunteer coordination and fundraising,” Larson said. “We are also in the process of writing grants for startup funding for pantries interested in joining the network.”

If your 501 (c) 3 or faith-based organization is interested in being a Community Pantry Network partner, please contact Terry Garner, REFB Programs Manager, at 707-523-7900.

Double Your Donation

When making your holiday donation make sure and check out your employer’s matching gift program. You may just be able to double your gift simply by filling out the proper form from your Human Resource Department. Mail it to REFB with your check and we’ll take care of the rest.



Planned Giving: No Amount is too Small!

When thinking about planned giving, it is not the amount that is important. What is important is that you plan ahead to make sure that you decide how your assets are divided, not the government. Planned giving allows you to reach your personal, financial, and estate planning goals while supporting a cause you believe in.

Planned gifts can be in the form of:

- Cash
- A portion of an estate
- Life insurance proceeds
- Stock and income from annuities
- Endowments or trusts

Planned gifts have numerous advantages. Many planned gifts provide tremendous tax savings that directly benefit the donor and their beneficiaries. Endowments or charitable remainder trusts can provide income for the donor as well as the charity. The benefits of planned giving depend on the specific situation and wishes of each donor, therefore, it is crucial to consult a tax attorney or estate planner.

By planning to contribute today you can make a significant impact on the future of the Redwood Empire Food Bank and its continuing efforts to end hunger in our community.



To learn more about the Redwood Empire Food Bank, or to donate or volunteer on-line, visit our website at www.refb.org

Mark Your Calendars

Opportunities To Help

Pack a Holiday Bag: November 11

Look for our brown paper grocery bag and donation envelope in your home-delivered Press Democrat on November 11 and fill it up with food for the holidays. Protein items especially are needed. Deposit your bag at REFB, or any Safeway, G & G Supermarket or Longs Drug Stores. Didn't get a bag? Friedman's Home Improvement Center will have extra bags at their checkout counters beginning November 11 and while supplies last.

Scouting For Food: November 15

The Boy Scouts will be out and about on Saturday, November 15 collecting food all over Sonoma County for REFB and fulfilling their oath of "helping others." Last year their help amounted to 7,815 pounds of food collected by some 40 Cub and Boy Scout packs and troops. Let's make this year an even bigger success.

Volunteer Saturdays

Join us from 8- noon on November 8, and 9-1 p.m. on November 22; 8 a.m.-noon on December 6 & 13 and help us prepare for our holiday food distributions. Reserve your spot by calling Jim Roessler at 523-7900 x 23.



Music to feed the soul!

KFOG's Live from the Archives returns with a new release coming out November 15th. Hear live tracks from Coldplay, Jackson Browne and the Wallflowers, to name but a few of the participating artists on this year's Archives 10. Find it at the Good Guys or online at Walmart.com.

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