

## Help Us Feed Every Child, Every Day



by **David Goodman, Executive Director**

One year ago, the Redwood Empire Food Bank released “Understanding the Economics of Hunger in Sonoma County: A Study of Emergency Food Recipients.” The study explored the degree of hunger experienced by the people we serve, while exploring the economic issues that lead to hunger in Sonoma County.

The study included 16 recommendations that, if implemented, would make a significant impact on reducing hunger in our community. This year, the REFB is focusing its resources on two of the recommendations that we think will have tremendous potential to positively affect the lives of working families and their children who are living with the threat of hunger. The Community Pantry Network will establish weekly food pantries throughout the community (see article on page 3). Our Every Child, Every Day - Summer Hunger Initiative will expand the number of locations where low-income children can eat a meal during the summer months.

Summer is fast approaching. On June 11, the school year will end in Sonoma County. The final bell that rings in three months of fun and games for most children will represent hunger for more than 25,000 children in our community who depend on free/reduced price meals during the school year. Unless we do something about it, no more than 2,700 (10%) of these children will receive Summer Lunch meals. If as a community we do not stretch our resources, Sonoma County will remain 38th out of 52 counties in Summer Lunch participation. Sonoma County produces world-renowned wines, we are home to innovative technologies, and we take pride in being the best community in which to live. How can we settle for ranking 38th in feeding our children? We should strive to be the best. We should be number one.

There is a solution to the problem of children, summer, and hunger. It is the USDA’s Summer Food Service Program. The Summer Lunch Program ensures that low-income children continue to receive good nutrition during the summer, so when the new school year begins, they will return healthy and ready to learn. Our Every Child, Every Day effort is focused on connecting individuals and community-based organizations with the Summer Lunch Program to set up meal sites during the summer months. Our aim is to eliminate any barriers leading to a lack of participation on the part of potential sites. In past years, the idea of participating in the Summer Lunch Program was met with resistance due to budget challenges, delivery problems, or lack of kitchen personnel. This year, Santa Rosa City Schools is willing to administer, prepare, and deliver meals to participating summer lunch sites – all at no cost! The only requirements remaining for Summer Lunch sites are to supervise the children, take attendance, and serve the meal.

So far, those who have stepped up to help include: the YMCA offering to expand its summer camp program to include meals, The Rotary Club of Santa Rosa providing a team of volunteers ready to help out at participating sites, Santa Rosa Recreation & Parks Department hosting sites and providing activities for other non-profit organizations, Catholic Charities introducing Summer Lunch at their downtown shelter, the 4C’s offering use of their facilities during the summer when they are closed, the Southwest Children’s Clinic opening a site in their neighborhood, and the Child Nutrition Division of the USDA assisting all of us in creating a strong Summer Lunch program.

Have you planned your summer vacation? Why not join the REFB in our Every Child, Every Day – Summer Hunger Initiative. If you are part of a community group, congregation, live near a park where children congregate, or are simply interested in ending hunger in our community, then you can help. Serving meals to children offers all the thrills of an amusement park, the joy of a magnificent view and the fulfillment of a well-planned trip. It may just be your most gratifying and memorable summer ever.

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## There's Magic in the Match

by Jean Larson, Deputy Director

It doesn't take a magician to turn \$1 into \$2 – not when there are generous people in our community like Shirley Spencer, an anti-hunger advocate and long time supporter of the REFB.

Over lunch one day, Shirley and I were discussing the distressing fact that children account for 37% of all the people in our county who receive food assistance through the REFB – that is over 15,000 children at risk of going hungry! As a mother and grandmother, Shirley was surprised and said, "I want to do something to help the children." She decided that not only would she donate money in support of our efforts to feed children, but she would also challenge others to do the same.

Help-the-Children Challenge

For every dollar donated during April and May, Shirley Spencer will match it dollar for dollar until we reach \$10,000! What a great way to double your donation. (You may even triple your donation by asking your company for a corporate match.)

The REFB is actively seeking other generous donors like Shirley, who want to make a difference by encouraging others to do the same through Matching Gifts. Matching Gifts will help us expand all of our programs from feeding children and seniors to transporting fresh fruits and vegetables into our county from the Central Valley. Here's how you can help make magic:

- Establish a match in your name (starting at \$1000) for a program you'd like to sponsor.
- Challenge your friends, neighbors, and relatives to match your gift.
- See if your employer has a matching gift program. Just send in the necessary paperwork with your donation and we'll do the rest.
- Ask your employer to establish a matching charitable gift program and stretch both individual and company resources.
- Create a special promotion for your business by matching sales or customer donations for a day, a week or a month.
- Be creative. One local photographer displayed and sold his work at a local restaurant then donated the proceeds to the REFB.

The real magic is the difference your donations make in the lives of children, seniors, families, and all those who face the threat of hunger daily. Not only does the food you provide nourish those in need today, it creates hope for a brighter future. For more information about our Match Program, call Jean Larson at 523-7900 ext. 13.



### Turn \$100 into \$2100. It's Magic!

For every \$1 you donate, we can distribute \$7 worth of food.

Imagine, your \$100 gift becomes \$200 (corporate match), then \$300 (Help-the-Children Challenge) and then we'll stretch your donation to provide \$2,100 worth of food!

That's more than enough to provide food for 60 Sonoma County children for one month through our children's program.

### The Community Pantry Network

These 3 new pantry locations are open once a week to provide groceries to low-income families.

The United Church of Christ  
825 Middlefield Drive, Petaluma  
Saturday, 11:30-1 p.m.

Samaritan's Pantry  
1074 Prospect Ave., Santa Rosa  
Friday, 12-3 p.m.

House of Manna  
811 Irwin Lane, Santa Rosa  
Saturday, 10 a.m.-noon

### Milestones

The Holiday Food & Funds Drive brought in 133,000 pounds of food, our most successful food drive yet.

## Every Child

### **We should be number one.**

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For more information on how you can become involved in the REFB's Every Child, Every Day - Summer Hunger Initiative, contact David Goodman at 707-523-7900.

### **Corporate Volunteers Go the Extra Mile to Pack 3000 Boxes Each Month**

We rely on corporate groups from all over the county to come in and pack 3000 boxes of food for low-income families, children and seniors every month. For the past year, employees of Alcatel have braved rush hour traffic twice a month after a full day on the job. These hard-working volunteers pack boxes with a wide assortment of canned goods, juices, rice, and beans. As Margaret Cavanaugh, a coordinator for the Alcatel team explains, "We want to make a difference by getting food to those who need it; especially, to those in our community, those close to home."

Recognizing the importance of feeding their neighbors in need, Intuit Corporation also regularly sends volunteers to work as well as donating grant money to help with equipment and supplies. Barbara Fong who coordinates the Intuit team says that: "Intuit employees feel great about giving back to the community by helping at the REFB. We know our extra time and energy is making a real contribution. Besides, it's great fun."

Recently, Smothers European and Smothers Parts International have joined our volunteer team on Thursday nights. As one of their employees remarked, "Our group has a blast, you get so much reward for just a little effort!" Workers from North Bay Eye Associates will agree. Going the extra mile to help has numerous rewards.

Why not encourage your company to bring together a group of 12 to 15 employees for a special evening of volunteering at REFB. Call Volunteer Coordinator, Jim Roessler, at 523-7900 ext. 23 for more information.



## The Legal Community Fights Hunger in Sonoma County, April 19-30

Food from the Bar is a nationwide fundraising effort that helps food banks feed the hungry. This year, the Sonoma County Bar Association (SCBA) is teaming up with the Bar Association of San Francisco, the Contra Costa Bar Association and bar associations throughout the U.S. to raise funds to feed people in need.

If you are a judge, attorney, bailiff, clerk, paralegal or in some way associated with the legal community, we need your help. Our goal is to raise \$25,000 from April 19-30, to help feed the 42,000 low-income children, seniors, the disabled, individuals, and working families needing food assistance in Sonoma County each month.

As William L. Adams, President of SCBA explains "For over a decade, Food from the Bar has been the legal community's response to hunger – and now the SCBA can be part of the fight to help end hunger right here in Sonoma County. We can make a difference."

It's not too late for you or your entire firm to participate. We encourage all individuals to ask their organization or firm to match their contribution. In return, participants will be recognized in The Press Democrat and Sonoma County Bar Association's newsletter, Bar Briefs. Recognition awards will honor one individual for overall participation, one for largest individual donation and one for largest firm donation. Call Lee Bickley for more information or to make your contribution today, at 523-7900 ext. 15. When you send in your contribution, make sure and tell us it's part of the Food from the Bar drive.

## Community Pantry Network

Many of us would like to help those less fortunate, but we simply do not know where to begin. That was Jackie Reese's dilemma. She wanted to help the homeless, but how? One day last fall, she saw an article in The Press Democrat about the Redwood Empire Food Bank and she knew her dream was possible. It was a moment of pure serendipity. Jackie Reese wanted to feed people at the same time that REFB was launching its newest program, the Community Pantry Network (CPN).

Over 36,000 people in Sonoma County live below the official poverty line (\$18,100 for a family of four) according to the U.S. Census 2000. Every day people call REFB seeking food. We're fortunate to have a list of participating agencies that supply emergency groceries, however most only have the resources to distribute enough food to last 3-4 days a month. This leaves a huge gap in the safety net for struggling families. With the high cost of living in Sonoma County, the current economic climate and cut-backs in government assistance programs, Community Pantries are more necessary than ever. Our initial goal for CPN was simple: recruit and assist 3 local organizations to open pantries, each providing 35 families with 20 pounds of food each week.

Meanwhile, Jackie, encouraged by the availability of food for non-profit agencies at REFB, approached her pastor and church board. She outlined her plans to start a pantry in her old office. She knew she was on the right track when the board skeptic said, "Go for it!"

### Jackie Reese's Three Steps to Setting Up a CPN

1. REACH A CONSENSUS: After gaining approval from the church pastor and board, Jackie presented her idea in the Church Bulletin and asked her congregation for help. Twenty people responded.
2. GATHER INFORMATION: A visit to the REFB was arranged to meet with Program Staff for advice and a tour of the shopping floor.
3. ORGANIZE SUPPORT: Jackie created a pool of 10 committed people and divided up tasks. One person is responsible for scheduling; one person shops for food at REFB every Wednesday and another on Friday; one person, with the help of her children, packs grocery bags on Wednesday evenings; 3-4 people man the pantry on distribution day each Friday. By rotating tasks from a large pool of volunteers, every one can participate without being overwhelmed. Church members who could not participate in person contributed funding for the program.

Today, Samaritan's Pantry provides groceries for 50 people a week every Friday from 12-3. Just last week, a woman came in desperate for a cake for her daughter's 16th birthday. As luck would have it, pantry volunteers had just picked up a couple of sheet cakes donated fresh that morning from Safeway. You just never know where good intentions can lead.

If you or your organization would like to contribute to or set up a Community Pantry contact Terry Garner at 523-7900 ext. 20.



I sit in my comfortable home and have plenty to eat, yet it's obvious that there are people all around me having to make difficult choices. Do I pay for heat or eat? Do I get my car fixed or eat? I knew I had to do something."  
Jackie Reese, founder of Samaritan's Pantry



We hope you'll join us Sunday, June 13th from 1-4 p.m. at Kendall-Jackson Wine Estates for the REFB's largest fundraiser of the year. Please see the enclosed flyer for all the delicious details.

Would you like to help make this our best Soiree yet? Call Lee Bickley at 523-7900 ext. 15. You could:

- Volunteer to help on a committee.
- Become an individual or corporate sponsor.
- Invite your friends and neighbors and enjoy a reserved table for 8 for \$1,000.
- Help us acquire unique and exciting auction items.
- Can you donate stays in vacation homes, frequent flyer miles to accompany a travel package, recreation activities, tickets to plays, concerts or sporting events?
- Can you donate hotel stays, spa packages, gift certificates to stores and restaurants, limo rides or personal services?
- Can you donate "Behind the Scenes" packages, unusual opportunities to go places the public doesn't usually get to see such as back stage at TV or radio tapings or a ride in a traffic helicopter?

All donations are greatly appreciated and will be acknowledged in The Summer Soiree program.

Please note, April 30 is the deadline for inclusion in The Summer Soiree program.

## Look for Us at the Rose Parade Saturday, May 15

It's the 110th Annual Luther Burbank Rose Parade and Festival in Downtown Santa Rosa. In step with this year's theme, Go for the Gold celebrating the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece, REFB has put together a marching demonstration of 'Olympic level formations' not to be missed. We encourage everyone to come out early to get a spot on the parade route. The Parade starts at 9:50 a.m., Saturday, May 15th. The Festival runs May 14, 15 and 16 at Juilliard Park and includes food booths, a bloom competition, kids events, street painting and vendors galore. Be sure to wave and shout as Redwood Empire Food Bank marches on by.



## Mayra's Lesson: When You Need Help You Give Help



No stranger to hard work and volunteering, Mayra first began working at Domino's Pizza when she was in high school and volunteering afternoons at the Labor

Union. After supporting herself for more than a decade, health and family problems left her unable to work for several years.

Today, she struggles to feed her young son while looking for a job. She sought help at the Redwood Covenant Church, an REFB member agency. Soon not only was she collecting food for her family, but she was also helping to pack it up and distribute it to others. Mayra is still determined to reenter the job force. Part of her re-entry strategy is to hone her skills by volunteering in the REFB office every Friday. We are thankful for volunteers like Mayra, who use innovative ways to help solve problems.

### Did you know?

This year, the REFB will distribute 8 million pounds of food. With a staff of just 18 people, nearly all of the food will be distributed with the help of volunteers. We benefit each year from more than 68,800 hours of volunteer time. The time volunteers so generously contribute is equal to an additional 33 staff positions.

### Milestones

January 23, 2004 the Coast Guard's Class 113 packed 1200 boxes in 2 hours, the most boxes packed in the least time.

## Thanks to All for a Successful Holiday Food & Funds Drive

The incredible generosity of 141 businesses, organizations and individuals helped collect over 133,000 pounds of food, the equivalent of 104,000 meals for people at risk of going hungry. Our thanks to all for making this the best Holiday Drive yet!

### Collecting 1,000 pounds of food or more

- Albertson's, 7 stores – 8,842 lbs.
- Allied Insurance, Santa Rosa – 3,170 lbs.
- Analy High School, Sebastopol – 1,040 lbs.
- Boy Scouts of America, Sonoma County – 8,209 lbs.
- Comstock Middle School, Santa Rosa – 1,960 lbs.
- Fusion Fitness, Santa Rosa – 1,300 lbs.
- G & G Supermarkets, 2 stores – 4,695 lbs.
- Kaiser Permanente, Santa Rosa – 1,920 lbs.
- Legacy Marketing, Petaluma – 1,781 lbs.
- Longs Drug Stores, 12 stores – 9,640 lbs.
- Maria Carrillo High School, Santa Rosa – 1,970 lbs.
- Rancho Cotati High School, Rohnert Park – 12,115 lbs.
- Redwood Regional Medical Group, Santa Rosa – 1,221 lbs.
- St. Joseph Health System, Santa Rosa – 2,420 lbs.
- Safeway Food & Drug, 12 stores – 34,828 lbs.
- Santa Rosa High School, Santa Rosa – 1,575 lbs.
- Yulupa School, Santa Rosa – 1,220 lbs.

REFB's Newsletter is published twice annually and is distributed to 10,750 households, businesses and organizations.

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## Mark Your Calendars

### Upcoming Events

April 19-30

The legal community helps fight hunger in Sonoma County with Food from the Bar. See page 2 for complete story.

May 8

Join the largest Human Race in the country, both in number of entries and amount of money raised. Gather your pledges for the REFB and walk, run, skip or hop the 3K or 10K course on May 8 at 7 a.m. organized by Sonoma County's Volunteer Center.

May 8

National Association of Letter Carriers one day food drive is the largest in the entire United States. Place a bag of food near your mailbox and your letter carrier will pick it up on Saturday, May 8. VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED Saturday afternoon at 3:30 p.m. for approximately 4 hours to sort the food as it comes in from the Post Office. We're having a barbecue for all participants. For more information, call Jim Roessler at 523-7900 ext. 23.

May 15

The REFB marches in the 110th Annual Luther Burbank Rose Parade and Festival in downtown Santa Rosa.

June 13, 1-4 p.m.

Save the date for The Summer Soiree and join us at Kendall-Jackson Wine Center for a Sunday afternoon of food, wine and music to benefit the Redwood Empire Food Bank.

Volunteer Saturdays

We're open from 8 to 12 noon on April 24, May 22, and June 26. Call Jim Roessler at 523-7900 ext. 23 to sign up.