

# THE REPORTER

## Larry Sly: People are willing to help when they understand the need

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The work of the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano is based on the fact that people want to help provide food to those in need in their community. In order to make that happen, our food bank has developed a sophisticated system of warehouses, trucks, food safety training, inventory software and all the parts of running a responsible food distribution business.

We operate with this level of responsibility because we know we need to honor the wishes of those who invest in our organization with donations food and funds.

Having seen this organization grow, I continue to be amazed at the generous nature of our community.

As an example, in June we received more than \$1,300 and 463 pounds of food from a county department because someone in the department was willing to motivate her fellow workers to help. This person cares because they knew hunger personally when they were a child. Their family had received Food Stamp benefits and reduced rate lunches when they were a child. They knew that hunger didn't go away during the summer, but got worse for kids in school who didn't receive a lunch each day. Because of what she knew, she cared enough to help.

It is critical for people to understand the circumstances that low-income people face.

Living in an affluent society, those who are doing well need to understand what life is like for those who do not have financial resources. We are currently working with students at St. Mary's College who are building a service learning component into the courses they offer. An economics professor understands it is important that students know what life is like for those at the bottom of the economic scale. We have seen that those who help at Food Bank distributions better understand the significantly different economic conditions that exist just 20 miles from their campus. Working with Food Bank staff the students who will be the future leaders of our corporate and political institutions will learn about hunger firsthand. They will see that the whole world does not always look like the community they grew up in

or the beautiful campus they inhabit every day. Because of the service learning St. Mary's is developing through this model of education, they are teaching their students in a more complete way.

I find incredible hope in both examples I cited above. People are taking action based on what they knew from their personal past and hopes for the future so that they can make a difference in the lives of those in need today. Others are taking steps to educate the future leaders of our society so they will understand the larger needs of the whole community. The common bond is how much people care about others and what they are willing to do to make life better for their neighbors in need. People are willing to help when they understand the need.

We invite you to visit the Food Bank for a tour or volunteer at a distribution site or partner agency to experience it yourself. Call 1-855-309-3663 to schedule.

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