



2020 IMPACT REPORT

SPECIAL COVID-19 EDITION



A TIMELINE OF OUR COVID-19 RESPONSE

MARCH 2020

Increased safety and sanitation practices to meet and exceed CDC requirements

Called in the National Guard to help fill boxes and meet demand

Pivoted School Pantry and Farm 2 Kids programs to support school district-wide breakfast and lunch giveaways

APRIL

Developed new volunteer safety protocols to keep staff, clients, and volunteers safe

Launched our first drive-thru distribution at Los Medanos College; provided food and CalFresh info to 500 households

MAY

Enlisted the National Guard to prepare 1,000 boxes and 10,000 pounds of produce bags each weekday

JUNE

Marked the Food Bank's 45th anniversary

JULY

Distributed 100% more food in Contra Costa County over the prior year

AUGUST

Took quick action to support people affected by LNU Complex Fire

SEPTEMBER

Transitioned all college pantries to pop-up style pantries to better serve students

OCTOBER

Started holding regular Community Produce Program drive-thru distributions

DECEMBER

Served 289,174 people in December— a record high

Distributed \$150,000 in gift cards to Partner Agencies; an increase of more than 275% over previous year

JANUARY 2021

Calculated 109,386 volunteer hours served in 2020; equivalent to more than 52 full-time staff

FEBRUARY 2021

Secured the keys and finalized plans for new warehouse space in Fairfield

Lifted our moratorium on new agencies; onboarded 12 new agencies

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

It's hard to believe a year has gone by since COVID-19 came and turned our lives upside down. The resulting recession made food insecurity rates skyrocket, and what we once referred to as an "unprecedented" demand has simply become the norm. With food distribution scheduled seven days a week, we are now serving 100,000 more people each month than before the pandemic.

We learned firsthand from the Great Recession that the negative effects of an economic downfall on hunger are not tallied in months, but years. So in moving forward during the COVID-19 Recession, we are focusing our efforts on:

- **Expanding our capacity** to responsibly and efficiently sustain the elevated need and grow our programs to ensure we are reaching all of our food-insecure neighbors (see page 3).
 - **Adapting and preparing** for other crises (including wildfires, earthquakes) that will inevitably occur during the extensive recovery period.
 - **Engaging our 240 partner agencies**, legislators, counties, volunteers and the community at large—all of whom played an integral part in our COVID-19 Emergency Response to date.
 - **Advocating** at the local and federal level as part of our effort to lead the fight against hunger. We were recently inducted into Feeding America's Advocacy Hall of Fame for our extensive efforts in 2020. It is our responsibility to speak up for those who don't have a voice.
- We hope after reading this COVID Impact Report, you'll better understand the vital role the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano plays in fighting food insecurity and building resiliency within our community. Even though there are many challenges ahead, I'm personally feeling inspired because 2020 solidified what I already knew—we can accomplish great things when we work together!

In partnership,



JOEL SJOSTROM
President & CEO

ONE YEAR LATER

An overview of our COVID-19 response (March 2020-February 2021), by the numbers.

**40,000,000
POUNDS
OF FOOD DISTRIBUTED**

That's 3.3 million pounds per month!

50%

of the food we distribute is **fresh produce**



**100,000
MORE
PEOPLE SERVED
EVERY MONTH**

We're seeing a record number of people turning to us for help.

6,500 VOLUNTEERS

stepped up to help us serve the community as an essential business.



MEET GUILLERMO

You can't miss Guillermo. Even among the hundreds of people at the drive-thru Community Produce Program in Pittsburg, the 95-year old man arriving with an empty wheelbarrow stands out.

Guillermo, a retired landscaper and construction worker, shared with us that sometimes he only has enough to eat one meal a day, and he repeatedly expressed his gratitude for the additional food he has received as part of the Food Bank's COVID-19 response.

Through his regular visits to the twice-monthly food distribution, Guillermo has struck up a friendship with our bilingual volunteer Lily. She describes Guillermo as "proud, active, energetic and fun" and refers to him as a "father-figure" because her dad and Guillermo share some of the same traits. "Both of them are very active, don't want any help and want to prove that they are still helpful," she said.

Guillermo, who is without a car, can also be described as resourceful. It was very challenging to balance 60lbs of food on his bicycle (not for a lack of trying on his part), so he solved the problem by using his trusted wheelbarrow to transport his free groceries the five-blocks back home.



EXPANDING TO MEET THE NEED

This year will bring a major milestone in the Food Bank's ability to serve the growing needs of our community, as we **relocate our Solano County facility** to the expanded warehouse space at 2370 North Watney Way in Fairfield (just a half-mile from our existing facility, next to the Jelly Belly Factory).

The Food Bank has grown dramatically over the past seven years, most recently in response to COVID-19, which brought shelter-in-place, staggering unemployment, a recession, remote learning and another unprecedented fire season. Despite utilizing four off-site storage sites beyond our existing warehouses in Concord and Fairfield, our facilities are bursting at the seams and we have occasionally been forced to decline large-scale food donations due to lack of cold storage space.

The new facility provides 104,000 square feet of office and warehouse space, versus our present space of 29,000. This expansion will allow us to continue our commitment to efficiently and safely meet the increased demand for food over the long haul. While record-setting need has helped drive the necessity for this move, record-setting donations and a strong financial forecast have paved the way to make it possible.

“We are incredibly optimistic about the opportunities this move affords us. Our goal, as always, is to grow and serve our neighbors in need while we lead the fight to end hunger.”

Joel Sjostrom, President & CEO



The coming months will be incredibly busy as our team works on permitting and constructing a large cold storage unit, installing racks, and building out office space and the Volunteer Center. We hope to be actively using the new warehouse by April 1 and to unveil the Volunteer Center later this year.



The dramatic increase in storage capacity will allow us to:

- Consolidate all off-site storage spaces for **more efficient** delivery and distribution.
- Provide **8,600 square feet of cold storage**, which will allow us to accept considerably more perishable food donations.
- Keep ready-to-eat food and water on hand to improve our **disaster response readiness**.
- Enhance the volunteer experience with a **brand-new Volunteer Center**.
- Meet years-old **capacity and expansion** goals.



SCALING OUR SERVICES

People are often surprised to find out that the Food Bank isn't where our neighbors in need go to receive food. Instead, we get food out to the community with the help of dedicated partner agencies (see page 6) and through direct distribution food programs that we operate seven days a week at various locations throughout Contra Costa and Solano counties (foodbankccs.org/programs).

At the onset of COVID-19, we had to scale very quickly, which included **quadrupling our food purchasing**. Getting that food out efficiently, with many new restrictions in place, required leveraging our existing partnerships and creating new ones. To that end we:

- Worked closely with the City of Concord to secure critically-needed offsite food storage.
- Reached out to neighboring cities and organizations to execute the new drive-thru distribution model, so we could safely distribute tens of thousands of emergency supplemental boxes.
- Started a new partnership with Meals on Wheels Diablo Region (read below).

In the never-ending quest to better serve our community, we are also working to:

- Bring more fresh, healthy produce to Contra Costa County by expanding our super successful Mobile Food Pharmacy Program, currently operating in Solano County.
- Continue making data-driven decisions, so we can expand services to identified pockets of poverty within areas that have been hardest hit by COVID-19.



Did You Know?



To protect our most vulnerable population, the Food Bank started a new partnership with **Meals on Wheels Diablo Region** in August of 2020. Low-income seniors receiving the deliveries of both hot meals from Meals on Wheels and groceries from the Food Bank (now including high-protein items including eggs, cheese, ground turkey and chicken breasts) are less likely to be forced to make difficult choices about what to forgo due to their fixed incomes not covering all the basic necessities of life.

PARTNERSHIP PREVAILS

Uniting with local nonprofits

Local nonprofits carry a heavy burden in directly supporting their communities. To support those efforts and expand its impact, **the Food Bank works with 240 nonprofit agencies** to help them fulfill their own noble missions to feed and serve the community.

Partner agencies looked to us for extra guidance and support from the very beginning of the pandemic, so they could remain open and continue to safely nourish the people who relied on them. With the help of our generous supporters, we were able to provide them with emergency food boxes, grants, gift cards and PPE.

And like us all, these committed organizations adapted to ambiguity during the early days of COVID-19. Despite shifting government guidelines and fewer volunteers, they soldiered on—rethinking and rebuilding systems to meet the need. Our partners adjusted their operations to keep staff, clients and volunteers safe while answering skyrocketing demand.



As a result of making some of these necessary changes, agencies discovered new opportunities to reach under-served groups. Martinez-based **Loaves and Fishes** found success in shifting from congregate feeding to to-go meals and are now serving families who shied away from community kitchens due to stigma. **Rebuilding Together Solano County** expanded its weekly pantry program to include delivery to mobile home parks and is now reaching people in need who had slipped through the cracks for years.



"Sustaining a 50-300% increase in need is the biggest challenge moving forward for many of our agencies," said Food Bank Senior Agency Relations Manager Amy Faletti. **"We are grateful to all of the nonprofits who are a crucial part of this vast hunger-fighting network. By linking arms, we can extend our reach and impact throughout the community."**

Ultimately, the lessons and discoveries of the past year will allow us, and the partners we work with, to better serve clients into the future.

VOLUNTEERS ARE ESSENTIAL

When the pandemic first hit, the Food Bank was propelled into emergency-response mode and information changed by the minute. As the need for food rose daily, we were simultaneously experiencing a 30% shortage in our volunteer workforce due to stay-at-home orders and the limited availability of corporate teams and organized groups.

We needed to get the message out that as an “essential business,” we would stay open and continue to serve, but we could only do it with plenty of help. We sent out the proverbial S.O.S. to our supporters that **volunteers are essential workers** and were needed immediately.

Thankfully, our community soon stepped up (as they always do), and we saw an influx of new volunteers: individuals with remote work flexibility, students on unexpected hiatus and families with newfound free time. In addition, the National Guard was enlisted to ensure we did not miss a beat in serving our neighbors.

We are grateful to ALL who volunteered in the past year, whether as a first-timer or a seasoned helper. We couldn't have done it without you—volunteers are the backbone of our organization! For those who still want to serve but haven't been able to return yet, we look forward to welcoming you back because hunger will not end with the pandemic, nor will our need for helping hands.

Sign up at foodbankccs.org/volunteer today!

