

“Everything’s so expensive ... I know we’re all feeling that struggle right now.”

-Tati



FOOD BANK PREPS TO TACKLE SUMMER HUNGER, SERVE HOPE — AS FEDERAL PROGRAMS SLASHED

With three growing kids at home, including two teenagers, mom Tati knows that food won’t linger in her cupboards for long.

“My food, it goes quickly because they eat a lot,” she says with a laugh.

Monthly CalFresh benefits have helped this single working mom nourish her kids while keeping her household budget balanced. But those benefits were recently cut in half when emergency food benefits from the pandemic expired. In the space of a month, Tati’s grocery budget dropped by more than \$500. And more cuts are on the way. Pandemic-EBT, which provided food benefits for her kids, also expires with this school year.

Neighbors across Contra Costa and Solano Counties are facing a similar situation. Food

benefits are falling, but high prices for food – not to mention gas, housing and other necessities – don’t budge.

Tati says she feels blessed that she has emergency savings that she can use to keep food on the table. She also appreciates Food Bank programs that are helping her feel some relief. Recently, she was able to visit a school food pantry hosted by our partners at Deer Valley High School in Antioch for groceries like tuna, peanut butter, cereal and potatoes and onions.

“It lets us cut back on some things at the store because everything’s so expensive,” she says. “I know we’re all feeling that struggle right now.”



"We're serving twice as many people as we did pre-pandemic – more than 350,000 of our neighbors each month."

A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

Here at the Food Bank, summer is a time to take stock of our efforts and look ahead to what comes next.

This year, we've seen an incredible need in our community. We're serving twice as many people as we did pre-pandemic — more than 350,000 of our neighbors each month. Thanks to you, we've been able to adapt and step in to be that safety net for our communities.

Looking ahead, with the recent expiration of emergency food benefits like Pandemic-EBT and the CalFresh Emergency Allotments, we know the need isn't slowing down. At the same time, government funding and donations are declining. Faced with this challenge, we're looking closely at how to stay resourceful and plan ahead — to sustainably serve our community for years to come.

One way we're doing this is by focusing on the future of our community — our kids.

Currently, 38,000 children in Contra Costa and Solano Counties are food insecure. In our Fall issue, I shared that we were launching our new Kids Nutrition on Weekends (K-NOW) Program to provide food on days when school meals aren't available. With K-NOW, K-12 students can focus on learning, growing and simply being a kid — instead of worrying about what they will have to eat at home.

We're happy to report that this program has already improved over 2,000+ students' lives (see a highlight of one of our partner schools in Pittsburg on page four). In the long-term, we're optimistic knowing we're creating opportunities for kids to pursue their goals and dreams by offering this healthy boost.

It's because of **you** that this ongoing work is possible. Your support gives us the opportunity to not only serve our neighbors today, but to create real systemic change in our community. Caring people like you are our community's safety net, and we are grateful every day for your steadfast generosity and kindness.

Joel Sjostrom
President and CEO
Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano



Service in the Classroom

HOW A FOOD PANTRY PARTNERSHIP PROVIDES GROCERIES – AND LIFE SKILLS – IN ANTIOCH

It's two days before Deer Valley High School's monthly food pantry, and the energy level in Bruce Ellison's classroom is running high. Around the room, students pack bags with tuna, rice and other shelf-stable foods, portion out household-sized allotments of potatoes and onions and load the finished food packages onto shelves.

The food will help students, staff and community members in Antioch put food on their tables. But for Ellison's students, the benefits go even further. With every bag packed, they're learning skills that can help them lead more independent adult lives.

In addition to his role as Deer Valley High's school pantry coordinator, Ellison is one of the teachers in its Community-Based Instruction

Program, which serves students with special needs who are between 18 and 22 years old. Nearly 70 students take part in the program.

"We're very job oriented and this teaches them a lot – assembly lines, socialization, lifting and packing," Ellison says. "It's all the different aspects of something like a warehouse, and now they can put on their resumes that they've done that ... it's a win-win for everyone."

DID YOU KNOW?

The Food Bank partners with 34 schools and First 5 California centers in Contra Costa and Solano Counties to run school food pantries. These pantries provide food to more than 1,000 households each month. Anyone in the community can use the pantry, whether or not they have children enrolled in the school.



Beating the Weekend Hunger Gap

WATCH

When Jamie Diaz and Ana Perez first handed out the Food Bank's K-NOW packs at Martin Luther King Jr. Junior High School, students weren't quite sure what to make of the new program. But, as they investigated their take-home bags of meals and snacks, smiles broke out.

"One kid said, 'It feels just like Christmas,'" Jamie, the Food Bank's child programs coordinator, remembers. "That felt really great."

When K-12 students don't get the food they need at home, it's hard for them to focus on anything else. And that hunger can affect everything – from physical and mental health to forming friendships and academic success. School meals help provide nutrition, but students still face a gap between dismissal on Friday and Monday morning.

Since the start of the school year, the Kid's Nutrition on Weekends (K-NOW) program has provided weekly packs of easy-to-prepare food to help bridge that gap. Since the launch of the program, K-NOW has served over 2,000 students and expanded to over 15 schools. At MLK Jr. Junior High, more than 100 students are taking part in K-NOW, and the results have been remarkable.

Ana, MLK Jr. Junior High's community school coordinator, said her students' mood and behavior have improved. And, because they know they're not alone in getting help with food, they are more willing to talk about

"That was the best meal I ever had."

hunger with their teachers and each other. "They feel more optimistic, more secure," Ana says. "They feel that they can approach any of us in the school site for support."

Ana is happy her students are more comfortable accepting help – and that they're enjoying the food! Recently she prepared food from a K-NOW pack for a student who hadn't had breakfast and was worried about taking a test.

He responded, "Oh, that was the best meal I ever had."

See how you're supporting the fight against child hunger at Martin Luther King Jr. Junior High School.

FOODBANKCCS.ORG/K-NOW



Volunteers give the Food Bank's K-NOW packs to 100+ students every week at MLK Jr. Junior High School. These take-home packs of meals and snacks help bridge the weekend gap from Friday afternoon through Sunday night.

GIVING ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

Carole Wedl has been a regular donor to the Food Bank for years. But she wasn't expecting it when her grandson, Elliot, told her he'd become a supporter too at only 10 years old.

"I usually go to his house once a week to help out, and I must have had my mail with me, and Elliot says, 'Oh, you have something from the Food Bank ... I gave to them too,'" Carole recalls.

Elliot, now 11, said he's not sure when he first learned about the Food Bank. But he can recall multiple times he's supported us, including participating in the Scouting for Food food drive with his Boy Scout troop and volunteering with his class at school.

"I know it helps people who don't have enough money to buy fresh food and stuff," Elliot says of the Food Bank. "So it's nice to donate so they can have a lot of good food."

When asked how to get kids interested in giving back, Carole said she thinks finding early opportunities for kids to start giving – whether it's through school, community

groups or as a family – is important, as is sharing your own reasons for supporting others.

"I told the grandchildren when they were little, there's only one rule I have and that is the golden rule – treat other people the way you want to be treated," she says. "I think people basically just need to help each other, you know? And a healthy community is good for everybody."



JOIN OUR COMMUNITY OF MONTHLY DONORS

With food and program expenses increasing over 60% since pre-pandemic, your monthly support for the Food Bank is critical. Join Nourish 365, our community of monthly donors, to be the safety net the Food Bank can rely on.

JOIN TODAY

foodbankccs.org/givemonthly





Corporate Spotlight: Raley's

WHY WE GIVE

Over the past five years, our partners at Raley's have helped to provide more than 10 million meals for our community – and that's only one of the ways they continue to support our neighbors in need.

The Raley's Food for Families initiative has raised nearly \$5 million for our food bank by encouraging customers to donate online and in-person at checkstands. Raley's absorbs the administrative costs, ensuring 100% of every donation goes to the community.

"Raley's Food For Families is proud to support the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano," said Chelsea Minor, Executive Director of Raley's Food For Families. "The Food Bank's mission is more important than ever, as they support our communities through these uncertain economic times. The Food Bank is nurturing and supporting our communities in so many ways, from providing meals and groceries every day to crisis relief during natural disasters."

Raley's provides support to the Food Bank in so many ways. Local stores donate food that is still edible but cannot be sold – more than 730,000 pounds last year. And when disaster strikes, their donations of water and other emergency necessities have helped provide relief to victims of wildfires, including those affected by the Camp Fire in 2018 and last year's Mountain, Mill and McKinney fires.



For corporate partnership opportunities contact: sponsorships@foodbankccs.org

MUST-TRY RECIPE

Banana Smoothie Muffins

Picky eaters at home? They'll never suspect these sweet, delicious muffins are packed with (shhh!) spinach. Perfect for breakfast or a healthy grab-and-go snack.

INGREDIENTS

3 ripe bananas
2 cups packed baby spinach
8 strawberries
1 1/2 cups whole wheat flour
3/4 cup sugar
1 egg
1/4 cup canola oil
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon salt

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Put paper or silicone muffin cups in a muffin pan (you'll need two pans for 14 muffins).
3. Puree the bananas, spinach, and strawberries in a blender. In a medium-size bowl, combine the flour, sugar, egg, oil, baking soda, cinnamon, and salt.
4. Pour the smoothie mixture into the bowl and mix well.
5. Spoon in the batter, filling each cup about three quarters full.
6. Bake for 20 to 30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted comes out clean.
7. Allow the muffins to cool on a rack, and enjoy! Makes 14 muffins.

Recipe and photo: popsugar.com



AT-THE-TABLE

What's inside

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- Service in the classroom