



WHEN YOU SUPPORT FOOD BANKS You Support Farms, Too

Veronica Mazariegos-Anastassiou doesn't get a lot of opportunities to grow collard greens. Though the growing conditions on the 40-acre farm she co-owns are ideal for collards, the demand for the vegetable typically isn't there.

But thanks to your support, collards and other culturally-inclusive vegetables have made their way onto her planting schedule – and onto your neighbors' tables!

"It's been fantastic for us to learn that something that we're really good at growing is finding a home," Veronica shares.

Over the spring and summer, we partnered with our peer food banks across the Bay Area to purchase collard greens, bok choy, and cilantro from eight small California farms, including Brisa Ranch.

Story continues on page 5



Celebrating Your Homegrown Wins

**STRATEGIC PLAN 2030 PUTS
YOUR NEIGHBORS AT ITS
HEART**

**STATE-LEVEL WINS: YOU
SPOKE UP - THEY LISTENED!**

**LOCAL GIRL SCOUTS FIGHT
HUNGER WITH PASTA E
FAGIOLI**



CEO Message

With the passage of the federal budget reconciliation bill H.R. 1, the Food Bank is facing the greatest challenge in our 50-year history. Historic cuts to CalFresh (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, nationally) and Medicaid will dramatically increase hunger in our community in the coming years.

There's no denying the profound impact these cuts will have on our neighbors. **But as we prepare for what's to come, we can't lose sight of the resources available to us in Contra Costa and Solano Counties.**

That's why **this issue of At the Table celebrates our homegrown hunger wins** – like a Bay Area partnership bringing local, culturally-inclusive produce to your neighbors' tables, and the critical state funding that hunger fighters like you helped save.

We're so fortunate that our state and county lawmakers recognize that solving hunger requires strong, stable funding. And we are equally fortunate to have a community filled with people like **YOU**, who have helped us evolve to support our neighbors through every challenge – from the

Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989, to the dot-com crash of the early 2000s, to the Great Recession in 2008, to the COVID pandemic.

As we rise to meet this historic moment, we are going to have to evolve once again. That's why I'm also excited to introduce you to our new **Strategic Plan 2030**, a five-year roadmap that will help set us up for our next 50 years of service.

With your support, we can not only continue our work to improve access to nutritious food – we can provide solutions that tackle the underlying issues that lead to food insecurity in the first place. You can read more about what's next on pages 4 and 5.

At a time when it can seem like so much is out of our control, I hope this issue acts as a reminder that real change is possible. When we work together and act locally, we do great things together. Thank you for continuing to be a hunger-fighting champion.



Caitlin Sly

Caitlin Sly
President and CEO

Meet Your Neighbor: Todd's Story



Todd has been visiting our partners at the St. Bonaventure's food pantry in Concord while he waits for a surgery that will allow him to return to his full-time job. With 8- and 10-year-old nephews at home, he says the weekly groceries you help provide ensure the kids can always "chow down" – even when the disability benefits meant to support him while he's off work don't arrive on time.

"I love that everybody here was smiling when I got here," he shared at a recent distribution, where he was able to pick up kid-friendly favorites like blueberry bagels and fresh fruit. **"I'm just thankful you guys are here."**

St. Bonaventure is one of over 245 food pantries, soup kitchens, childcare centers, and other nonprofits we partner with to ensure your support gets where it's needed most. Thanks to supporters like you, our partners at St. Bonaventure are providing healthy (and kid-approved!) groceries for up to 150 families like Todd's each week.



Watch Now

IMPACT IN ACTION

Check out this video from St. Bonaventure to see one of our nonprofit partners in action!



Introducing ... Strategic Plan 2030

Our new strategic plan was built for our community, by our community. We worked closely with our neighbors facing hunger, our nonprofit agency partners, our Board of Directors, and staff to identify the challenges facing our community today ... and the solutions that will ensure your support continues to make a real difference in people's lives.

THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, WE'LL BE GUIDED BY THESE THREE COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PRINCIPLES:

OUR NEIGHBORS ARE AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO

Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and seen as a unique individual – not a number or statistic. We're working closely with the people we serve to understand and address the barriers they face, and to empower them to choose the foods that are right for their families.



COMMUNITY WELLBEING BEGINS WITH SUSTAINABLE NOURISHMENT

With your help, we've already increased the amount of nutritious, local, and culturally-inclusive food we distribute – and we know we can do more. We'll work with our neighbors to learn what ingredients they need for the dishes that connect them to their cultures, and with the local farmers who can help provide them.



FIGHTING HUNGER MEANS MORE THAN MEALS

Food has a unique power to bring people together. We believe the Food Bank can do the same. We'll work with our community partners to tackle the underlying causes of hunger by connecting our neighbors with the resources beyond food that they need for longer-term stability.



YOU SUPPORT FARMS, TOO

(continued from front cover)

Our neighbors have shared that these vegetables aren't just nutritious and tasty – **they are connections to their cultures.** Everyone deserves to be able to make the dishes that comfort and nourish them during tough times. By listening to our neighbors and working with partners like Brisa Ranch, we're able to ensure your support does just that!

Because our food banks ordered ahead, our farm partners were able to plant crops knowing they would find a home after harvest. That's not always guaranteed for small farmers.

"A lot of the time we're just kind of going with what we think we will be able to sell," Veronica says. "You put in all the work to grow the seed or the plant, knowing very well that you can have to till it all under because you couldn't find a buyer."

By working together, our local farmers can get the predictability that helps them **grow and sustain their businesses**, and our neighbors can have access to the foods that **nourish their spirits as well as their bodies – a win-win!**

At the end of this pilot program, we've learned some important lessons. Most importantly, collaborations like these can work! While the future of government funding for local food purchasing at the federal level is uncertain, with your help, we can continue to find sustainable, resourceful ways to bring our neighbors the foods they cherish ... all while supporting our local farms and our local economy.



Supporter Spotlight: Sunset Development

Our partners at Sunset Development have turned their annual tree lighting ceremony at Bishop Ranch in San Ramon into an annual celebration of giving. Each year, as they kick off the holiday season, they donate \$10,000 to the Food Bank. That's enough to provide 20,000 meals for our neighbors in need.

"My grandparents instilled in me the importance of giving back to the community," shares Sunset Development CEO Alex Mehran, Jr. "They began donating to the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano decades ago. **I'm honored to carry forward their mission of supporting this important organization that serves those who have food insecurity among us.**"

Thanks to Sunset Development for helping to make the holidays brighter for everyone in Contra Costa and Solano Counties! If you'd like to be part of this year's celebration, the tree lighting will take place on November 21 from 6 to 7 pm at Bishop Ranch.



President and CEO Caitlin Sly with Sunset Development team at 2024 tree lighting ceremony.



GIVE A GIFT

foodbankccs.org/donate



Silver Award-winning Pasta e Fagioli

For their Silver Award – one of the most prestigious awards in Girl Scouting – Abigail, Addison, Lyla, and Siena of Girl Scout Troop 31927 in Concord teamed up to tackle local hunger. In addition to hosting a food drive, they created a cookbook focused on nutritious, low-waste recipes like this pasta e fagioli.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tbsp oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 1 stalk of celery, chopped
- 4 cloves of garlic, minced OR ½ tsp garlic powder
- 2 tsp each of fresh or dried parsley and Italian seasoning
- ¼ tsp crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
- 15 oz cannellini beans, drained
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 15 oz crushed tomatoes
- 8 oz tomato sauce
- 1 cup ditalini or other small pasta noodles

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and set aside.
2. Heat oil in a medium-sized pot. When hot, add carrots, onion, and celery. Cook for 5 to 10 minutes, or until all vegetables are soft.
3. Add spices and stir well. If using raw garlic cloves, cook for 2 additional minutes, stirring frequently to avoid burning.
4. Add chicken broth, crushed tomatoes, and tomato sauce. Stir to combine. Reduce heat to a simmer. Cover and cook for 10 to 20 minutes.
5. Add pasta and beans and cook until warmed through. Season with salt and pepper to taste.



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You Spoke Up – They Listened!

Earlier this year, we let you know about proposed cuts to hunger-fighting programs in the California State budget. Because hunger fighters like you raised your voices and supported the efforts of our Food Bank Advocacy Team, **these state-level cuts did NOT go through.**

The funding and programs you saved will be critical as we work to fill the gap left by cuts to SNAP and Medicaid. Thank you for helping us protect much-needed resources like...

CalFood

\$60 million will support the purchase of California-grown and produced food by food banks. CalFood was facing a nearly 90% cut, but thanks to you, it was fully funded at the last minute!

School Meals for All

Secured additional funding and investments to help schools with kitchen infrastructure upgrades and staffing.

Diaper Banks

Invested \$7.4 million to continue funding local diaper distributions for low-income families with infants and toddlers.

Want to learn more about how you can take action to support hunger-fighting policies? Sign up for The Brief, our monthly advocacy update.



SIGN UP NOW



foodbankccs.org/newsletter