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## **Candi Thornton Elected as Chair of Alameda County Community Food Bank's Agency Network**

*Founder and executive director of Arsola's Distribution Center and Community Services to lead ACCFB's Agency Relations Committee and serve on the Food Bank's Board of Directors*

**OAKLAND, Calif. – October 22, 2020** – Alameda County Community Food Bank (ACCFB) today announced that [Candi Thornton](#), founder and executive director of Arsola's Distribution Center and Community Services, has been elected by the Food Bank's partner agency network as the Network Chairperson and head of the Agency Relations Committee (ARC).

In this role, Candi serves as a member of the Food Bank's Board of Directors, representing the voice and recommendations of the agency network – and helping guide the Food Bank to set goals and develop programs to benefit the network. Her term is effective immediately, through December 31, 2021. Candi had previously served as the Network Vice Chair since 2014.

Candi founded Arsola's Inc. in 1999 – growing from a neighborhood effort helping 25 families to one of ACCFB's largest network partners, now serving more than 2,500 East Oakland residents a week. Arsola's food distribution programs include an emergency food pantry and delivery programs for homebound individuals, in addition to adult re-entry housing. During the COVID-19 pandemic Arsola's has nearly doubled the number of households it serves, and has dramatically expanded its services including weekly, contactless drive-through distributions.

“Every day we are deeply inspired by the 300 agencies who work extremely hard to keep Alameda County nourished – and Candi truly personifies the passion of this network,” says Suzan Bateson, executive director of Alameda County Community Food Bank. “The issue of hunger is a profound one in Alameda County and we're fortunate to work alongside leaders like Candi who develop and collaborate on innovative solutions. It is an honor to work with Candi; we're thrilled for the vibrancy she brings to this critical role.”

Candi succeeds Sara Webber, executive director of Berkeley Food Network (BFN), who had served as Network Chairperson since 2016. Sara was elected first while serving as executive director of Berkeley Food Pantry. She subsequently co-founded Berkeley Food Network in December 2016 and had been elected Alameda County Community Food Bank Network Chair for five consecutive terms.

Sara stepped down as Network Chair in October 2020 to focus full-time on building BFN's infrastructure and -- with the help of a \$300,000 grant awarded in May 2020 by Bayer's philanthropic arm, Bayer Fund – to establish one of the nation's first urban-based Redistribution Organizations (RDO). As an RDO,



Berkeley Food Network will serve as a network hub partnering with ACCFB to serve smaller hunger-relief organizations in Berkeley.

“The Food Bank’s agency network has strengthened substantially over the last five years, thanks to Sara’s leadership,” adds Bateson. “Sara’s vision and passion has not only had a substantial effect on the agency network – it’s informed the amazing work she’s doing with Berkeley Food Network. We’re excited for the future of that partnership.”

Agency representation has been a vital part of Alameda County Community Food Bank’s Board of Directors since its founding in 1985. Today, ACCFB remains one of a small handful of Feeding America-affiliated food banks with network agency governing power and board presence. Candi joins present agency network members Krista Lucchesi, director of Mercy Brown Bag Program, and Ruben Canedo, director of strategic equity initiatives at University of California, Berkeley, on the board.

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**About Alameda County Community Food Bank**

Alameda County Community Food Bank — Feeding America’s 2016-2017 Food Bank of the Year — has been at the forefront of hunger relief efforts in the Bay Area since 1985. The Food Bank serves 1 in 5 Alameda County residents by distributing food through a network of 300+ food pantries, soup kitchens, and other community organizations, as well as direct distribution and COVID-relief programs including school programs, home delivery and contactless drive-through distributions. This year, the Food Bank will distribute the equivalent of 43 million meals. More than half of the food distributed is farm-fresh produce. For 14 consecutive years, Alameda County Community Food Bank has received Charity Navigator’s top rating — Four Stars — ranking the organization among the top 1 percent of charities nationwide. Learn more at [www.accfb.org](http://www.accfb.org).