



ALAMEDA COUNTY
**COMMUNITY
FOOD BANK**

Until everyone's fed

MEMBER OF
**FEEDING
AMERICA**

Community Harvest

SPRING 2021



**So much
has
changed...**



Antonio,
Multimedia Coordinator

When I first started designing this newsletter 16 years ago, ACCFB was operating out of the Oakland Army Base and we only had about 30 staff. Back then, the Community Harvest newsletter had black and white photos and we only printed about 16,000 copies.

So much has changed since 2004.

This newsletter will reach over 60,000 homes. We now operate out of a 118,000 square foot facility — more than twice as much space as our previous one. Our staff size has quadrupled to 120 passionate people working every day to distribute millions of pounds of food every month. Even with all that growth, my coworkers are working harder than ever to meet community need today.

Last spring, our Community Harvest Newsletter was being printed just as the shelter-in-place order began. There wasn't a word in it about COVID.

And, again, so much has changed... but much faster this time.

Now, more than ever, this newsletter is an important way for you, our community, to connect with our work.

Instead of being in a bustling office, I designed this newsletter in my living room where I meet with my coworkers over Zoom. My bedroom has become my wife's office during the day. And my two children attend high school from home, each in a different room.

For the first time ever, the Food Bank is distributing food directly to people through drive-through distributions and we have added so many amazing new partners in the last 12 months.

As our team began planning this newsletter, we knew it had to be different. Inside you will find the firsthand accounts of staff, volunteers, partners, donors, and clients who have been on the front lines of this pandemic.

While we never expected to be distributing this much food, it is because of these incredible people and many more like them that we have been able to rise to the occasion and meet the need.

I hope you will find inspiration, hope, and gratitude within these pages.

I'm keeping my courtside seats



Suzan Bateson,
Executive Director

It's been 20 years since I was appointed as your leader at ACCFB.

I am a very different leader than when I first came here. I've learned from many of you who patiently helped me realize my dreams of nutritious food (tons of produce!) flowing out each day, a permanent home for our work, brave political action, racial equity work, and innovative — and smart — growth enabling us to rise to many challenges.

To be clear: I am the lucky one.

Your next leader will be as well.

You read that right: It's time for the world's greatest organization (I assure you this is no hyperbole) to seek its next leader.

We are on an amazing roll. But as a passionate pragmatist, I thought about the long economic recovery ahead (likely to take a decade). And I thought about how strong ACCFB is — our amazing staff; incredible Agency Network; fantastic, diverse Board; great reputation; and solid financial position. And I knew: we're ready for a new leader to guide us on this next leg of the journey.

If you know me, you know I'm an enthusiast for Community. I'm proud that we've built the Community I craved as a leader. People who feel deeply and act thoughtfully, with passion, humor, humility, and heart. That will remain because ACCFB itself is a leader and changing who's at the helm won't change who we are, or what we believe. The next leader to earn this opportunity will build on an amazing foundation.

I'm grateful for all I've been given — from the opportunities to create meaningful change, to the inspiring colleagues near and far with whom I've shared this journey.

To be clear, this isn't a goodbye (nor will you hear the "r*****ment" word in my story!). I'll be leading ACCFB until the new leader is in place and properly introduced (that's how we do things, right?). And I'm quite excited about my next chapter (more on that later).

And count on me keeping my courtside seats because you'll never, ever find a bigger fan of this organization and this work than me!

Help us nourish our community year-round

Become a monthly donor by March 31st and have your recurring gift **matched for a year**, up to \$100,000!

By electing to become a sustaining donor, you make it possible for us to quickly respond when the unexpected happens — like a global pandemic.

You can also sign up online at accfb.org/Join-Monthly.



I'm always smiling — even behind my mask

A few years ago, I was training people to drive semi-trucks when my now boss showed up looking for a driver. He talked me into it. I'm going on four years at ACCFB.

My days start at 6:30 a.m. My favorite words before I leave for work are "get your mind right." In other words, prepare yourself to see the need out there when delivering food to our partner agencies.

I always have a smile on my face — even behind the mask.

When I make deliveries, they always say, "how come you're always smiling?" I say, why not?

This whole year has been strange. I've seen stuff that I've never seen before. The food level has picked up. I think if I stopped smiling, what's going on in the world would have really affected me. But I like what I'm doing. And I see what we do here at the Food Bank — we help people.



Community Resilience

Homies Empowerment started 11 years ago as an after-school program for gang-involved youth. We now run a community center and are building a high school for youth who have been pushed to the margins. Our emancipatory work is rooted in Revolutionary Love, Sacred Identities, Putting In Work, and Self-Determination. Through liberatory schooling, community cultivation, food justice, and cooperative economics, we work alongside our community towards a world absent of coloniality, whiteness, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy.

We started working with ACCFB as an Emergency Response partner after we opened our FREEdom store, a pantry for food and essential items, in March 2020. And we recently became an ACCFB member agency.

The FREEdom store is open every Tuesday. By 8 a.m. each Tuesday, we have fresh produce boxes delivered while volunteers and staff set up tables and tents. By 9:30 a.m., we begin receiving prepared meals from local restaurants. We have a sacred circle to get grounded before sharing food, diapers, and more with our community. Our last families come through around 4 p.m. as we clean up and end with a closing circle.



The last year has taught me about community resilience, hope, and faith in the people to take care of one another, and the importance of relationships to provide for one another. The pandemic highlighted the reality of hunger in our communities, but this reality will still exist when we begin to move out of this time.

I hope that individuals and institutions see not only the suffering of communities, but the resilience and the solutions inherent in our people. We need to invest in community-based solutions for food insecurity and address the systemic issues that make hunger possible.

Learn more by following @homiesempowerment on Instagram!

When I encourage my friends to donate to local organizations, they often respond that they would rather donate their time. While volunteering is beneficial, I know monetary donations are equally helpful. It's easy to feel like you don't have a lot to give, but even a few dollars a month could really make a difference.

This is the “event” I was meant to manage

I managed live events for 15 years. I was rehearsing a theater show last March when it became obvious that events — and my career — would be put on hold.

I began volunteering in June to give back, and then joined as staff in October to run the Oakport drive-through distribution. After one day, I knew this was the “event” I was supposed to be managing.

We distribute food to 1,100 families every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Each morning, as the sun rises, we start with an empty parking lot. Then from 9 a.m. on we load 50,000 pounds of food a day into clients’ cars, wave hi to kids, and thank them for coming by. And they thank us. “We” are 25 volunteers and 10 Hero Grant recipients — folks who lost their jobs due to COVID and are now working as heroes in our community.

I have done hundreds of events, but Oakport has been my most rewarding. Hopefully someday food insecurity will be a thing of the past and we can use the parking lot for a festival or a concert, but until then my role there will be making sure people can get the food they need.



Megan,
Oakport On-site Coordinator

First I was furloughed ... eventually, they let everybody go



Jesus and Magy,
Oakland residents

I’m a field service technician and before COVID, I was working up to 60 hours a week. First I was furloughed. Then they brought me back with limited hours. And eventually, they let everybody go.

It affected us a lot because we had to leave our house that we were renting. We had to move in with my mom and we got rid of a lot of stuff.

It’s been an adjustment.

My wife, Magy, is working part time in a warehouse, I’m not working — so we’re in need of food right now.

We’ve been coming to the drive-through distribution since the summer. My 15-year-old son and 13-year-old daughter are at the stage where they’re always hungry, so the food helps a lot.

We like the groceries that we get: milk, cheese, eggs, and the fresh produce. It’s a long line but it does move fast. That’s why we keep coming back here.

We’re actually thinking of volunteering with the Food Bank. That’s something we’ve always wanted to do and now we have the time for it.

It took 3 hours to transcribe the calls



Katherine,
Food Drive Coordinator & Temporary Helpline Operator

In the early days of the pandemic, when I was working on the Helpline, it felt like drinking out of a water hose. I came in at 6:30 a.m. to listen to hundreds of voicemails left the night before. Some days, it would take me three hours to transcribe the calls.

The stories are unforgettable: A 90-year-old gentleman who outlived all of his family and had no means to buy groceries. The disabled veteran who kindly asked if he could have groceries delivered. The woman who called from Chicago, worried about her sister battling cancer in Oakland.

When I responded, I tried to make sure that each caller felt welcomed and listened to. At times, when people felt ashamed, I let them know that I too had once been where they were now, and that we were happy to help them.

Listening to the voices of our community reminds me that no matter how we may quantify food insecurity, this issue is about the struggle of real people, and the very reason why we commit to live into our mission of a hunger-free Alameda County.

It's been a rewarding experience

Since the pandemic forced us to work from home and attend high school virtually, we've been looking for ways to use our extra time in a safe and meaningful way.

We had volunteered at different food banks in the past, packing food and sorting donations. But because we have high-risk family members in our household, we didn't feel safe to volunteer indoors. We were excited when we learned that ACCFB started the contactless food delivery program.

We spend about 3-4 hours a week picking up food boxes at the warehouse and delivering them at the



Jochen and Matias,
home delivery
volunteers

doorsteps of people who cannot pick up food at distributions.

What has most surprised us is how widely spread the need for food assistance is in our community.

It has been a rewarding experience to know we can help people get fresh food when they cannot leave the house. Even though we cannot meet anybody in person for safety reasons, we enjoy the father and son time together in the car.

It is nice to think that our contribution of just a few hours a week makes a difference to people.

I have the biggest office in the building!



Betzy,
Program Coordinator

I moved from Texas last April for this job. The pandemic hit in March, so most staff were remote when I started. On my first day there were only three people in this room with 40 desks. Some days I'm the only person. I joke that I have the biggest office in the building!

Being a Program Coordinator is very satisfying. We have 350+ unique partners. We make sure they are supported while serving the community. COVID brought a rise in Food Bank clients, and since the Bay Area is very diverse we have a need for more language support. My first language is Spanish, which allows me to fill that gap.

You'd be surprised at how much goes into supporting our partners. I can't do this without my colleagues who specialize in their own skills. It's very quiet which is my "normal" but I've heard that once upon a time this space was booming with conversations. To me that is mind-blowing! I can't wait to meet and greet my coworkers normally again.

When I was a child I was able to benefit from a similar program so I know that getting a meal is much more than what it looks like. It is an honor to now give back to my community. I get to go home and feel good about the work that we are doing every day.

It feels great serving others

I first learned about ACCFB in 2017 through my Boy Scout scoutmaster and have been volunteering ever since. The three hours of packaging fruits and sorting snacks goes by fast. It feels great serving others while still having a good time.

When I heard about Census phone banking, I was immediately interested, especially due to the lack of volunteer opportunities under the COVID lockdown.

Moreover, the Census is important. Because the data collected is used for the next decade, I was motivated to help as many people as possible. While volunteering, I realized just how diverse our community actually is. There were a number of residents whose native language was not English, so I was able to utilize my Spanish and Mandarin skills.

In total, I completed 54 hours of phone calls. I was truly blessed to be able to gather 20 high school students and collectively make over 2,000 calls.

In the future, I hope to pursue a medical career to continue supporting the community I have grown to love and understand.



Samuel,
Food Bank volunteer

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO GET AND GIVE SUPPORT!



GET FOOD

WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

If you or someone you know needs food, please call us at **1-800-870-FOOD (3663)** or visit www.foodnow.net



VOLUNTEER

As an essential business, the Food Bank remains open to volunteering. Our greatest need is for weekday volunteers (age 18+) who can commit to joining us weekly for full days for at least a month.

Register for a shift at accfb.org/volunteer



ADVOCATE

Our advocacy team works year-round with every level of government to end poverty and inequity.

Get involved as an advocate. The movement is stronger with you in it.

Learn more at accfb.org/advocacy

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



SEARCH: *Alameda County Community Food Bank*



Yes, I want to help our community recover

Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift of: ☐ \$35 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ Other: \$ _____

I want to become a monthly donor, and match my gift for a year!

Your monthly gift — made by March 31 — will be matched for 12 months, up to \$100,000!

☐ **Make this my first gift:** \$ _____ (my first gift is enclosed). I authorize Alameda County Community Food Bank to charge the amount indicated above to my account on the ☐ 1st OR ☐ 15th of each month. You can also sign up at accfb.org/join-monthly.

I am signing and dating to confirm my monthly commitment to ACCFB. Signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Please make check payable to:

Alameda County Community Food Bank (or "ACCFB")

P.O. Box 30757

Oakland, CA 94604-6857

Please charge my gift to my:

☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ AmEx ☐ Discover

Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Name on Card _____

Signature _____

Donate online at donate.accfb.org

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Your donation is tax-deductible as permitted by law. The Food Bank will send you a receipt.

