



NOURISHING NEWS



COMMUNITY FOOD BANK
OF SOUTHERN ARIZONA

MAY 2025

CHICKENS, COMMUNITIES, AND CAPS IN THE AIR!

An Im-Peck-Able Helper



During his first year at our Las Milpitas Community Farm, David Encinas pulled a heart-shaped beet from the soil of his family plot. “It was pretty incredible,” he recalled. “I give the plants love, and this was the plant giving love back to me.”

And David has given Las Milpitas plenty of love over the years. He grew up right across the street from where the farm now sits, when the land was “just desert and river,” and he has watched it grow from seed to sprout. His grandmother gave him “his green thumb” at an early age, and fate aligned perfectly in 2016 when he was able to secure a small plot at the farm, just steps from his home.

There is a minimum requirement of 3 volunteer hours a month for anyone with a garden plot, but David quickly became a near-daily presence. After eight years of volunteering, he was brought on as a contracted employee last year and is at the farm every morning, even on Sundays and Mondays when it’s officially closed.

Though he’s always happy to help other gardeners, David’s primary role for the past year has been the self-proclaimed “chicken guy”. “I just love seeing them run. It makes my morning amazing.” David feeds the chickens, tends to and maintains their coop, and just “chills with them”. He describes his time at Las Milpitas as his “zen time” before heading off to his real-world job.



“Any time I’m feeling down, I just come here and look at the chickens.”

As long as he’s in Tucson, David has no plans of ever leaving the farm. “It’s like a second home to me,” he says. But even with his expertise and the immense support of dozens of other volunteers, Las Milpitas is always in need of additional help, whether you have a green thumb or not. For upcoming volunteer opportunities, please visit bit.ly/MilpitasVolunteer.

¡Ahora disponible en español!
communityfoodbank.org/newsletters



Hello Friends and Neighbors,

Somehow, we're already a third of the way through the year, and as spring (far too quickly) gives way to summer, there's so much happening during a consistently busy time at the Community Food Bank.

First off, a huge thank you to our amazing, generous community who continue to reach deep and give whatever they can to help. On April 1st alone, Arizona Gives Day, donors gave upwards of **\$115,000** toward our goal!

April was National Volunteer Month, and I'd also like to thank our incredible volunteers who continue to donate something every bit as valuable: **their time**.

As the school year ends and food prices remain high, summer can be especially tough for families in need. Our May 10th Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive helped restock our shelves, but rising demand means we still rely heavily on our amazing donors and volunteers. Thank you for your continued support!

Sio Castillo

Sio Castillo, Interim Chief Executive Officer
Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona

From Local Ideas to Lasting Impact

Each year, the Community Food Bank is thrilled to award Thriving Communities grants to support a variety of community project ideas focused on:

- Strengthening local food systems
- Educating communities on health, food access, nutrition, jobs, and cultural preservation
- Supporting emergency food efforts through infrastructure, capacity building, and dignified service

This year, we awarded 24 organizations including South Tucson Community Outreach, the Native American Advancement Foundation (NAAF), and the Local Co-op (Cochise County).

The South Tucson Community Outreach aims to address food insecurity, social isolation, and accessible resources for residents of South Tucson. The grant should help **"bring people together over food, conversation, culture, and community,"** according to Executive Director, Desiree Guerrero.

"[This Grant] has given us the opportunity to expand the reach of the program, outside of our own district, to neighboring districts on the far west side of the Tohono O' Odham nation." - *Robb Schrimshaw of NAAF.*

"I'm really excited about being able to support local farmers in building their businesses up, and creating marketing streams for them where there previously were none." - *Veronika Jollivette of the Local Co-op.*





Caps off to Caridad Class 39

We wish every one of you could experience the emotion, joy, hope, and [quite frankly] *deliciousness* of a Caridad graduation. In April, we were lucky enough to celebrate the inspiring, 39th graduating class of our Caridad Community Kitchen Culinary Training Program.

Our free, 10-week course is much more than just a culinary training program. Sure, students learn knife skills and cooking techniques while acquiring valuable kitchen experience, but they also gain life skills, find a supportive community, and for many, get a brand-new lease on life.

“This program saved my life! I learned many things about myself, being a member of a team, met my best friend here, and of course all these culinary skills that have led me to a new job!”

– Excerpt from Jamie’s speech,
Caridad Class 39 graduate

“I stand before you a changed man. In this program, I learned how to grow, how to be myself. I learned to love again. I learned to love myself! I found my confidence, and learned to face challenges and move forward with success.”

– Excerpt from Jared’s speech, Caridad Class 39 graduate

You can learn more about this truly inspiring program at communityfoodbank.org/caridad-community-kitchen-culinary-training.

It’s going to be CAN-TASTIC! Canstruction Tucson: Build for Hunger is a fun and unique building competition between local architects, engineers, builders, contractors, and designers. Using canned foods and other non-perishable items, these Cansculptures will be built and on display at the Park Place Mall from Sunday, June 29th to Friday, July 18th, 2025, as a larger-than-life art exhibition. This year’s theme is Landmarks! Learn more at communityfoodbank.org/canstruction.



What’s GROOVIER than helping kids? Did you know one in five children in Arizona faces hunger? On Tuesday, July 8th, please help kids across Southern Arizona with our SummerStockUp Day! We’re trying to raise \$50,000 in one day to support our Summer Nutrition Kits and stock school pantries for the year ahead. Learn more at communityfoodbank.org/event/summerstockup-july-8-2025

UPCOMING
EVENTS

Arizona Gives... and Gives

Arizona Gives Day fell on April 1st this year, but the generosity of our Southern Arizona community that day was no joke. We understand there is no shortage of worthy local causes, so we're incredibly honored you chose to support us with over \$115,000 that day!

\$115,000
HELPS PROVIDE



And because of our bulk purchasing efforts, volunteer support, donated items, and efficient distributions, your donations will provide 345,000 meals to our neighbors in need over the upcoming months. It's amazing the impact our community can have in a single day.



Bugs, Bats, and Bebidas... Oh My!

Dozens of bat and bug enthusiasts "flocked" to our Las Milpitas Community Farm on March 29th to celebrate our prized pollinators and their vital importance to our planet and its food systems.

The evening featured activity stations from the Sonoran Desert Museum, the Tucson Bee Collaborative, the U of A Entomology Department and more. Plus, we had food trucks, live music from the Egg Thieves, and of course...tasty and refreshing "bebidas".

There were even a few bug costume sightings, though we're hoping for a "Bat"man appearance next year. That one's too easy.



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3003 S. Country Club Rd.
Tucson, AZ 85713
(520) 622-0525
(800) 950-8681
communityfoodbank.org



The Community Food Bank receives most of its funding from people like you. Supportive public funding includes: City of Tucson, Pima County, USDA, Community Development Block Grants and Community Service Block Grants/Pima County and City of Tucson; Arizona Department of Economic Security/Social Services Block Grant and Arizona Department of Health Services. Community Food Bank programs provide services to eligible participants without regard to race, color, creed, religion, handicap, age, national origin, sexual orientation, political beliefs or gender.