



COMMUNITY
FOOD BANK
OF SOUTHERN ARIZONA

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF IMPACT

NOURISHING NEWS

IN THIS ISSUE: BREAKING BARRIERS AND BRANCHING OUT.

FEBRUARY 2026

A Voice Takes Root

As a member of the Pascua Yaqui community, Abigail always felt a pull toward activism, a desire to speak up for “people like me,” as she puts it. She wanted to understand her community more deeply: its history, its challenges, and the people who shaped her southside Tucson neighborhoods. However, it’s often been challenging for her to find like-minded peers. “I had a hard time connecting with people my age in Tucson,” she says.

Fortunately, Abigail found the Community Food Bank’s Sowing Remedies Youth Fellowship. She joined peers her age who shared her lived experiences and her questions about the world. And she began to understand how issues like housing, education, and access to healthy food are deeply connected. Sowing Remedies opened doors she never imagined she’d walk through. She learned how policy really works, how to speak to people in power, and how to advocate effectively. “There’s more to it than just leaving a voicemail,” Abigail says with a smile.

Sowing Remedies also helped her recognize the systemic barriers that contribute to poverty and hunger in her community. Abigail hopes to break that cycle as a future neurosurgeon and is well on her way to being accepted into the University of Arizona’s Medical Program. “**People think where we’ve come from defines where we’re going,**” she says, “**but that’s not true.**”

Today, Abigail remains active with the Community Food Bank’s advocacy team and the Sowing Remedies alumni network. Her past leaders, Liz and Claudio, continue to be guides. “**They’re huge mentors for me. They really look out for you and support you in everything you do.**”

Regardless of where her future career takes her, Abigail knows that advocacy will always be part of her life and recommends the program wholeheartedly. “**It’s a great program if you like learning... or even if you don’t,**” she concludes with a grin.



NATALIE'S NOTES



Hello Friends and Neighbors,

My first six months on the job have not been without their challenges. The federal shutdown strained families already on the edge, SNAP benefit suspensions pushed even more neighbors into crisis, and things went back to “normal” just as the holiday season, traditionally our busiest time, kicked in.

Yet, as the need grew, so did the compassion of our community. Donations arrived from every corner of Southern Arizona: classrooms, small businesses, corporate partners, and neighbors who had little but insisted on sharing. The community’s overwhelming generosity carried us through that difficult stretch.

Now, as we welcome a new year, we celebrate 50 Years of Impact at the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona. As someone who long admired this organization from afar, I’m struck by what this milestone represents: five decades of compassion, five decades of innovation, and five decades of hope.

Our history fuels our commitment to ensuring everyone has the food and dignity they deserve. As we look forward to the next 50 years, I know we’ll meet every challenge the same way we always have: **together.**

Natalie Jayroe, Chief Executive Officer
Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona



CITRUS GOT US IN A PEEL-GOOD MOOD! Pick the extra citrus from your backyard tree and bring it to one of our **Super Citrus Saturdays!**

FEBRUARY 28TH: 10AM - 12PM		FEBRUARY 28TH: 11AM - 2PM		MARCH 14TH: 11AM - 2PM	
Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona: 250 E Continental Rd. GREEN VALLEY		Fry's Food Stores at: 10450 N La Cañada Dr. 11350 W Tangerine Rd. TUCSON		Fry's Food Stores at: 7050 E 22nd St. 4150 E 22nd St. TUCSON	

TEE-ING UP A GOOD TIME... FOR A GOOD CAUSE! Just make a minimum \$5 donation to the Community Food Bank and get **FREE ADMISSION** on **SATURDAY, MARCH 21ST** to enjoy the ColoGuard Classic at La Paloma Country Club. **Learn more at: bit.ly/CFBcoloGuard**

Branching Out for a Sustainable Future

2025 was a tough year for SOMBRA. The Community Food Bank's (CFB) project aimed at planting native mesquite trees—trees that cool urban neighborhoods, improve air quality, and even provide nutritious, sustainable pods for traditional, native foods like atole—was hit hard by federal staffing cuts to key partner organizations. This meant planting far fewer trees this year than hoped, closer to 600 instead of an anticipated 1,000+.

With fewer hands to help distribute these trees, the team turned to an unexpected but familiar ally: public libraries. **Three Pima County branches—Arivaca, Valencia, and Sam Lena**—were eager to step in, as the distributions aligned naturally with their already existing work distributing seeds and offering gardening classes. Through this renewed partnership, library members can now take home free mesquite trees along with resources on how to plant and care for them.

“This collaboration goes beyond tree distribution. We’re engaging residents in conversations about the benefits of native trees, water-wise gardening, and local food traditions,” said Victor Ceballos, CFB Garden Education Supervisor.

Looking ahead, the team anticipates a stronger planting season this spring with infrastructure improvements, including increased staffing, at several partner planting sites. The goal according to Ceballos is to not “put eggs in one basket... we need more than one basket.”



Luis Padilla takes home the first mesquite tree from the Arivaca Library branch.

UPCOMING EVENTS



GET READY TO GIVE BACK! Your donation to the Community Food Bank on Arizona Gives Day—**TUESDAY, APRIL 7TH**—will help ensure our communities are healthy and hunger-free today, tomorrow, and always.

Donate online easily at: azgives.org/organization/communityfoodbank-azg

GIVE TODAY AND MAKE YOUR TAX DOLLARS MATTER!

Your donation may qualify for the Arizona Charitable tax credit. Earn a \$495 state tax credit for individuals or \$987 for a married couple filing jointly. 2025 taxes are due **APRIL 15TH, 2026**. Our QCO code is 20488.

Learn more: communityfoodbank.org/tax-credit

WANT TO MAKE YOUR TAX DOLLARS MATTER?

Give today for a healthy, hunger-free tomorrow, and you may receive a tax credit for your generosity.





Holiday Highlights

The holidays are traditionally our busiest time of year, but also often our most rewarding. Below are a few highlights from the season that we're proud to share.

FLOUR POWER:

The mesquite tree is both versatile and vital to Southern Arizona. In November, we celebrated this remarkable desert treasure at Las Milpitas Community Farm by milling its pods into a local, sustainable, and delicious flour.

A NOSH WITH NEIGHBORS:

Our neighbors are at the heart of everything we do. In December, we honored them at Caridad Community Kitchen's sixth annual Guest Appreciation event with some barbecue ribs, mac n' cheese and even live music from one of our talented Caridad cooks!

SEASON'S EATINGS:

Our Santa Cruz River Farmer's Market came alive this holiday season with even more vendors, phenomenal local produce, gorgeous weather, and plenty of community energy. We can't wait to watch it bloom in the year ahead.

DECK THE HAUL(S):

Our community never backs down from a challenge and its response to fighting hunger this holiday season was nothing short of spectacular. Together, community food drives all over Southern Arizona collected **over 150,000 lbs.** of non-perishable food in November and December alone, including:

- Winterhaven: 27,813 lbs. collected
- Holiday Harvest: 6,818 lbs. collected
- Season4Hope: 8,831 lbs. collected



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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.

**DONATE
TODAY:**



Este boletín está disponible en español: communityfoodbank.org/newsletters