1960-70s

Late 1960’s: U.S. economy weakening, unemployment skyrocketing, and inflation increases prices.

Capturing food from grocery stores begins the concept of what is now known as food rescue or food recovery.

1977: There are 18 food banks in the U.S. This network of food banks became known as America’s Second Harvest.

Hunger is on the rise. Few, if any, programs exist to feed people facing poverty and hunger.

1967: John van Hengel founds St. Mary’s Food Bank Alliance in Phoenix, AZ, the first food bank in the world. The idea ignited when he saw a mother feed her children food from a dumpster.

In an effort to repeat the success of St. Mary’s, the federal government provides grants to grow and expand the food bank concept.

1980s

Roadrunner Food Bank becomes the 40th member of America's Second Harvest national network.


Food rescue is difficult due to lack of computerized inventory systems, limited warehouse storage, run-down buildings, and old vehicles.

1981:
Roadrunner finds its first home at 1119 Edith Blvd. SE in Albuquerque.

Our first food distributions begin out of the trunks of cars and the backs of pickup trucks. It is widely believed that corn was the first item distributed.

1985:
The Food Bank distributes ONE MILLION POUNDS of food for the first time.

This letter is Roadrunner Food Bank's Article of Incorporation signed by Reverend Titus Scholl

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

This simple food bank concept swept me off my feet, really excited me. It stirred up in me lifelong longings to ameliorate the conditions of the poor with food — surely an elemental necessity.

Food banks rapidly discovered that vast amounts of edible foods could be saved from ignoble burial in landfills, and donated through regulated agencies to the hungry poor — at little cost. A modern wondrous fairy tale with happy ending.

Artic excerpt by Reverend Scholl about Roadrunner Food Bank
Early 1990s

July 1990: Recession begins followed by what has been described as a “jobless recovery.”

1992: **Dyanne Strongbow** designs our iconic logo which depicts a roadrunner, the state bird, and corn to reflect our first distribution.

March 1994: Senator Pete Domenici secures a special HUD grant allowing the Food Bank to move to **2645 Baylor SE** (formerly the Clover Club Potato Chip Company.)

1992: National unemployment rate close to 8%.

**Buddy Gallegos** succeeded Reverend Titus Scholl and served as the director from 1981 to 1990.

**Sherry Lee** served as the director from 1990 to 1995.

January 28, 1994: Windstorm takes part of the roof off the Edith building forcing a move to a new building.

Even families get involved in helping out as the Baylor facility is cleaned up. Pictured is Melody’s daughter, Carol, removing the bumpers from the outside dock doors.
December 1995: Melody Wattenbarger becomes the fourth chief executive of the Food Bank at a time when the board considers closing its doors.

July 1997: Roadrunner begins to acquire produce in addition to canned goods and boxed food items.

November 1998: The Food Bank receives its first bequest. Melody said, “It was like being let out of jail. It gave me hope.” Several timely gifts help turn around the day to day operations of the Food Bank.

Late 1990s

November 1998: The Food Bank receives its first bequest. Melody said, “It was like being let out of jail. It gave me hope.” Several timely gifts help turn around the day to day operations of the Food Bank.

“"When I started there were no volunteers or donors. I found 200 random names in a pile of paperwork. I had no clue what they were for so I turned them into a mailing list and sent a letter asking for support. It was our first donor mailing and it worked.”

Melody Wattenbarger

October 1997: Outside mural was dedicated at the Baylor warehouse.
2000s

Staff size increases and staff roles begin to specialize. Computer technology is introduced to help manage and accurately account for food inventory and distribution.

August 2005:
Massive numbers of volunteers and donors show up at Roadrunner to support Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

2001:
Newman’s Own and Ford Motor Company donate a Class B truck.

DISASTER AND RECESSION

2007:
The first tractor trailer is donated anonymously. Out of town deliveries expand.

Fall 2008:
Food lines at distribution sites reach record levels.

2007:
Roadrunner Food Bank helps in the disaster relief efforts of Hurricane Katrina.

U.S. economy plunges into worst economic disaster since the great recession.

Boxing Olympics recruited corporate groups to race and fill food boxes for low-income seniors. The event was held outside as the warehouse was too small.

Damaged products are sent to food banks rather than the landfill. Volunteers sort the product and re-distribute what is usable to those in need.
2008-2010

Summer 2008: The Mobile Food Pantry program starts providing farmers market-style food distributions in a pop-up site model.

2009: Roadrunner distributes a record 22 million pounds of food for the year.

2010: Our fleet grows with two additional tractor trailers, allowing for enhanced long-distance deliveries to rural New Mexico communities.

A LARGER FACILITY

2008: America’s Second Harvest changes name to Feeding America.

April 2009: Roadrunner moves to 5840 Office Blvd. NE. The facility is five times larger, allowing for growth when the need in the state is greatest.
2011-2013

Winter 2011: Roadrunner Food Bank serves six additional southwestern counties for a total of 16 counties in their service area.

GROWTH

July 2012: Roadrunner earns Albuquerque Business First’s Sustainable Business Award for becoming a greener and more environmentally friendly organization.

June 2013: Feeding America Map the Meal Gap report shows New Mexico is ranked #1 for childhood hunger and #2 for overall hunger.

June 2013: Roadrunner Food Bank distributes a record number of pounds at 26.6 million.

March 2013: SNAP Outreach Program begins with grant funding to assist clients with SNAP and other public benefits.

Six expanded counties to Roadrunner Food Bank’s service area
Spring 2014: Second Chances Job Training Program helps former inmates learn valuable warehouse skills.

August 2014: Albuquerque Business First selects Roadrunner Food Bank as Non-Profit of the Year.

March 2015: Senior Hunger Initiative is established to provide a combination of hunger-relief programs to senior sites.

August 2014: Childhood Hunger Initiative is established addressing family hunger with partner schools. In its first year, it quadruples the amount of food distributed by our previous backpack for kids program.

September 2014: Hunger Study shows the Food Bank's statewide charitable hunger network is now serving 70,000 people a week.

August 2015: The Health and Wellness Initiative starts with the launch of the Healthy Foods Center. This medical referral food pantry provides weekly food for people experiencing chronic health issues and hunger at the same time.
May 2017: Melody Wattenbarger is named Feeding America’s John van Hengel Fellow. The award honors the ideals of John van Hengel who developed the concept of food banking in the 1960's.

November 2017: The solar array and battery storage at the Food Bank are featured on the front cover of the monthly magazine, Solar Builder.

July 2017: Readers of the Albuquerque Journal select Roadrunner Food Bank as the Non-Profit of the Year.

GREEN INCENTIVES: The solar array will save millions in dollars in energy use while providing 65-90% of the Food Bank’s electrical needs. The savings are allocated to the core mission turning savings into meals.

December 15, 2017: Melody Wattenbarger retires as President and CEO of Roadrunner Food Bank after 22 years.