April is National Volunteer Month!

We couldn’t be more excited to celebrate! Our volunteers are our lifeblood. Roadrunner Food Bank can distribute hundreds of thousands of pounds of food every week and our volunteers are a huge part of making that possible.

We sat down with one of them to talk about his commitment. Meet Robert Grey. A retired biologist and a self-described extrovert, Robert spends a ton of his time in the volunteer world. He’s tended to lean towards the “outdoorsy kinds of volunteering opportunities.” Robert grew up with eight siblings and the outdoors was always a calming place for him — that’s the draw to his volunteerism on hiking trails and planting trees. His wife, Martha, has always leaned towards human services volunteerism. She drew him to Roadrunner Food Bank.

We asked Robert about his time at the Food Bank, he said, “When I first started, it was my wife’s idea. Our girls were little, so I’d say I’ve been volunteering here around 27 or 28 years.” At first, his volunteer time here was kind of sporadic. Now, he’s dedicated to coming to the bread room twice a week!

This isn’t the only way he helps those in need. His drive to help people comes from a personal experience with homelessness when he was young. “I started out living with the brother of a friend,” he recalled. “We had a falling out, so I lived in my car for a while until it broke.” He couch-surfed when he could, but found it wasn’t hard to overstay his welcome. “I would get excited when I had an extra quarter. My car was close to a laundromat, so I could pull out my sleeping bag and use that quarter to warm it up. It was so much easier to fall asleep.”

Robert loves his time here. He’s made great friendships with the staff and volunteers. He and the other “Bread Guys” go to coffee when they can. He likes to talk to the new volunteers and help train them.

Robert left us with a challenge to our readers to, “Get involved. It’s a great way to set an example for your kids — especially little kids.”

If you want to take Robert’s challenge and get involved at Roadrunner Food Bank, head to rrfb.org/volunteer to learn more.

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Watch

Roadrunner Food Bank is carefully monitoring developments regarding the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus). Our staff has been meeting regularly and is actively supporting our hunger relief agency and partner distribution network across New Mexico. Food distributions will continue with food safety and health of both the clients we serve and the agencies we partner with top of mind.

Roadrunner Food Bank is also actively consulting with a variety of organizations and leveraging other partners who are in a position to support measures to ensure access to food for the most vulnerable members of our community continues through this ongoing and developing situation.

Please visit rrfb.org/covid-19 for updates and materials that may help guide you during this time. Note: if you are experiencing symptoms of the virus, please call 1.855.600.3453 before visiting a healthcare provider.
May is National Older Americans Month

Healthcare costs for Americans aged 65+ are three to five times higher than for younger adults.

In New Mexico, 73 percent of our senior neighbors facing hunger report high blood pressure and another 43 percent report diabetes in the household. The medical bills add up increasing the chances that low-income seniors simply don't have enough in their monthly budget to afford food.

Transportation and mobility can also be a factor in seniors’ ability to eat healthy diets. Not to mention, there's a rising trend of grandparents raising their grandchildren on limited, fixed incomes. Most of the time, social security benefits, retirement income and SNAP (formerly food stamps) aren’t enough to cover the needs of our seniors. As a result, 21 percent of the people served by Roadrunner Food Bank are seniors.

Our Senior Hunger Initiative (SHI) is working to provide an important source of food to seniors in need. The program operates at many low-income senior housing locations and senior sites. Each location receives regular food deliveries to distribute food through on-site mobile food pantries and fixed food pantries designed specifically to help New Mexican seniors obtain healthy, nutritious food.

During mid-May an annual State of Senior Hunger report is released showing the impact of hunger on seniors right here in New Mexico. As part of Older Americans Month, we encourage you to take some time to visit our website at rrfb.org to discover what the findings show.

And during May, consider taking an action to help a senior you know. Offer to drive a senior to a doctor’s appointment, share a story about a senior citizen who has impacted your life in some way using #OlderAmericansMonth on social media, or spend time just helping a senior who could use a hand.

Donor Feature:
Trudi Bollmann

Trudi is a donor and a member of our Full Plate Society. She also spends time volunteering in our Healthy Foods Center, a medical referral food pantry at Roadrunner Food Bank. Our staff recently spoke with her about why she supports Roadrunner Food Bank. She shared the following.

“You need food to survive, you need food to keep you healthy and the social aspect of food is important too. When people don’t have access to basic things like food, it personally hits me hard. If we cannot support our community with basic everyday needs, how can people survive?

I volunteer in the Healthy Foods Center here at the food bank once a week assisting people who are living with a chronic medical condition and facing food insecurity. The program focuses on providing access to healthier food. We all know to keep yourself healthy you need healthy foods. Healthy food is expensive especially when you have little to no money.

Volunteering gives me the chance to see people who are improving their health and improving their food security thanks to Roadrunner Food Bank’s Healthy Food Center.

As a donor, I understand that this work takes money to provide food to New Mexicans struggling with hunger. That’s why I am a member of the Full Plate Society. It is important for a charitable organization to have a solid base of donors. This helps with support, planning out resources and making sure existing programs continue. I encourage you to donate too.”

The Full Plate Society is a group of donors who commit to a five-year pledge and give a minimum of $1,000 per year. If you are interested in learning more about the giving society, please contact Brian Brown at 505.349.8829 or email brian.brown@rrfb.org.
This Spring Join in the Fight Hunger, Spark Change Campaign

Join in Walmart’s annual Fight Hunger, Spark Change fundraising campaign to help food banks across the country through Feeding America. The in-store campaign will be held from April 13 – May 11 at Walmart and Sam’s Club locations across the United States. Customers are encouraged to get involved in two ways:

1) Donate $1, $2, $5 or any other amount at checkout.
2) Buy participating items with the Fight Hunger Spark Change icon shown here, and a donation of 10 cents will be made by participating suppliers to local food banks.

You can extend your support on social media too using #FightHunger and #Roadrunner. Take photos of the products you purchased with the Fight Hunger Spark Change icon and share why you are taking part and joining in on social media.

Your support impacts people like Rose. She lives in a rural community in our state. She’s disabled with a chronic debilitating disease. It’s meant she’s had to stop working because of her illness. As a single parent, no money has been coming into the home. With two children to feed the family has struggled. Often food isn’t something they can afford without an income. Until Rose’s disability benefits start, it’s meant she has relied on the food distribution Roadrunner Food Bank brings to her kids’ school. She attends every month and recently shared with school staff, “Things are much better now. I know my kids will eat and it is such a relief knowing this program is here in difficult times.”

Thank you for caring for people like Rose and her boys. Your commitment to helping solve hunger makes such a difference for tens of thousands of people every week!

SeedCorps Provides Agency Support to Build Capacity at Food Bank Partner Sites

Part of the mission of Roadrunner Food Bank is to SEED partnerships that build self-sufficiency for tomorrow. To that end, we work with the AmeriCorps program, funded through federal and state governments, nonprofits and corporations with the goal of engaging US adults in public service to the community.

We call our AmeriCorps members “SeedCorps” since they are working to help us strengthen our partnerships with member-partner sites throughout the state. We have members based out of both our Albuquerque and Las Cruces locations. These amazing people receive a stipend for all their hard work. Our SeedCorps Program Manager, Kate Page, says, “By having these AmeriCorps members out serving at the sites, really getting to know the folks in need, we’re able to hear the needs of the people more directly and bring that right back into the food bank.”

As the program grows, Roadrunner Food Bank will be recruiting for additional Summer SeedCorps members who will work with us and at our partner sites from May through July. These members are critical as they help build agency and network capacity.

If you are interested in becoming a Summer SeedCorps member, reach out to Kate at kate.page@rrfb.org or 505.314.0603.
Help Us Stamp Out Hunger!

Every year, on the second Saturday in May, Roadrunner Food Bank participates in a nationwide effort called Stamp Out Hunger. This food drive helps the food bank feed our neighbors during the summer — one of the most food insecure times of year for those in need.

Graciously hosted by the National Association of Letter Carriers and United States Postal Service, every year, we receive a generous and significant amount of non-perishable food to help feed our hungry neighbors. We encourage the community to join in and participate.

Leave bags of non-perishable food items by your mailbox so letter carriers can take them to 11 area post offices. Food donations are also accepted at the post office the week of the food drive and at Roadrunner Food Bank during normal business hours.

Volunteers are a vital part of making this incredible event possible. We need volunteers at all the post offices in Albuquerque on Saturday, May 9th. If you are interested in participating, please reach out to Mehdeen at mehdeen.abbasi@rrfb.org or 505.314.0593 to sign up.

Visit rrfb.org/stamp-out-hunger.

Outside of the Albuquerque area? Check with your local post office or local hunger relief organization to get involved in Stamp Out Hunger in your community.

The History of Food Bank and 40 Years of Service to New Mexicans in Need

Known as the “Father of Food Banking,” John Van Hengel was the first person to create the first food bank in the world in Phoenix, AZ, now known as St. Mary Food Alliance. Founded in 1967, he captured food surpluses from local grocery stores and brought it to a warehouse or “bank of food.” From there it was then re-distributed to people experiencing hunger through a network of partner locations like food pantries.

Others across the country learned about this unique idea, and once the food bank concept reached a critical mass of interested communities, it exploded. It took off in a very short amount of time in communities throughout the US. As a result, many food banks were formed in the late 1970’s up until about 1984, becoming a movement in communities across the country.

One of those food banks was Roadrunner Food Bank. Established in late 1979 by Rev. Titus Scholl, we began operating in early 1980. His wife Charlotte told former staff members, “He just thought this is something that can do good across the county. There are so many poor and such a need for food for people and this was one way to fill that need. He felt he was making a much bigger contribution than he was making as a minister.”

Forty years later, Roadrunner Food Bank is still holding up the legacy that Rev. Titus Scholl began. As part of anniversary year, we invite you to join in. Send our staff an email with thoughts about times you volunteered with us or helped at another hunger relief organization in your community. Send us historical photos you may happen to have when you volunteered at our organization over the years, or photos of our current or former buildings. We’d love to hear from you and your experiences with us over these four decades.

Send by email: info@rrfb.org
Send by mail: Attention Communications, 5840 Office Blvd NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109

Charlotte Scholl reflected back with a staff member in 2010 saying, “He (Rev. Scholl) would be thrilled it has grown and that it is still there after all these years. The need is still there.”

Thank you for honoring Rev. Scholl’s work by sharing your stories and photos. And, be sure to follow us on social media as we’ll share historical stories on food banks throughout the year.

A Gift in May Makes Twice the Difference Thanks to Bank of America

This May, Bank of America will match gifts made to Roadrunner Food Bank up to $30,000. This special opportunity is perfect for supporters looking to double the impact of their contribution.

When children are out of school, free and reduced breakfasts and lunches they count on during the school year aren’t available. It means families on tight and very limited budgets simply don’t have a way to make up for those missed meals. It’s fewer meals and fewer groceries impacting the entire family.

With your help, a gift in May can provide twice the number of meals. For example, a $20 gift helps Roadrunner Food Bank provide up to 100 meals, but in May that same $20 gift is matched with $20 more from Bank of America, making the total number of meals we can provide up to 200 meals.

Paul Mondragon, New Mexico Market President said, “New Mexico leads the nation in child hunger and a quarter million people of all ages are unsure where their next meal may come from. Every one of us is just one life event away from needing the invaluable services of Roadrunner Food Bank. As a longtime supporter, we are excited to help with this matching gift — because it’s hard to concentrate on much else if you can’t feed your family or yourself first.”

Your gift can be matched at rrfb.org/BoFA, or by mailing in a check to leverage your support. Thanks for considering a gift in May!