

THE ROADRUNNER ROUNDUP



Fall 2020

Our Neighbors Impacted During the Pandemic

Like so many in our community, food banks have been continuing to provide critical services to New Mexicans in need. As countless numbers of people in our state continue to face the realities of layoffs, furloughs and missed paychecks, the financial devastation leaves so many facing hunger, often for the very first time.

Over these many months of the pandemic, our staff has heard countless stories of need and worry, and about how so many families are without the financial resources they need. We're sharing some of the experiences of people in our food lines. These are snippets of stories collected from clients on paper plates. Many shared these thoughts right from their car window as they waited in line for food:

"We need this help during the pandemic. I'm a student at UNM and this food helps me, my wife and son. Thanks so much for doing this. It really helps." - Xinmin

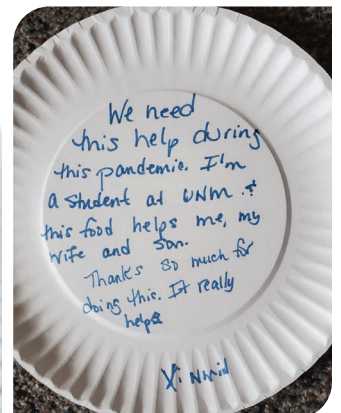
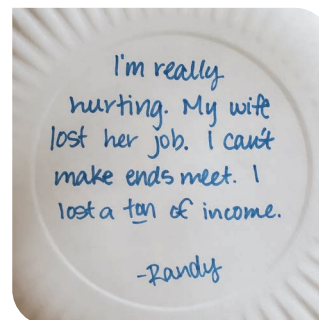
"I'm a senior on a very fixed income. I have so many medical bills from my cancer treatments two years ago. I try to be positive and my faith helps. This food helps too!" - Patricia

"My hours got cut in half, so we come here. We never needed help before COVID-19." - Olga

"I have medical problems and can't work. My wife has a couple odd jobs, but we still struggle." - BJ

We often share client stories on Roadrunner Food Bank's social media sites. Please take a few minutes to follow us there and learn more about the people we serve.

We'd love to hear your story about why you give, volunteer or help out in your local community. Visit www.rrfb.org/share-your-story to let us know more about you!



The CARES ACT Provides New Tax Incentives for Donors

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provides increased tax incentives for both individuals and corporations making donations to organizations like Roadrunner. All 2020 taxpayers, whether they itemize or not, can deduct donations up to \$300 (or \$600 for married couples). It is a one-time "above the line" adjustment to income that will reduce a donor's adjusted gross income (AGI), and thereby reduce taxable income. (Gifts from a donor-advised fund do not qualify). Also, individuals and corporations that itemize can now deduct much greater amounts of their contributions. Individuals can elect to deduct donations up to 100% of their 2020 AGI, up from 60% previously. Corporations may deduct up

to 25% of taxable income, up from 10%. Finally, the required minimum distributions (RMDs) are waived for IRAs, including inherited IRAs, and other qualified retirement plans such as 401(k) and 403(b) plans. This is only effective in 2020. But, the minimum age for making Qualified Charitable Distributions is still 70½, the annual limit is still \$100,000, and is still available for 2020 even though RMDs have been suspended. Or you can take cash distributions from your IRA and make deductible gifts in 2020, with no AGI limitation. For more information about how the CARES Act may impact your specific financial situation, please consult with your tax, legal or financial advisors.

Questions? Contact andrea.nash@rrfb.org or call 505.349.5333.



Health and Wellness Initiative Partnership Makes Impact

In New Mexico, 59 percent of people experiencing food insecurity report having to choose between paying for medical-related bills or buying food at least once in the past 12 months. Seventy-five percent of hungry households report purchasing unhealthy and inexpensive food as the most common way to at least have *something* to eat. Roadrunner Food Bank's Health and Wellness Initiative (HWI) was designed to help those who are food insecure so they don't have to decide between medicine and food.

One way this is accomplished is through a partnership with First Choice Community Healthcare (FCCH). FCCH has nine healthcare facilities in three counties. The locations are set up in communities to ensure that everyone may receive medical care regardless of their ability to pay. The partnership is focused on helping patients struggling with hunger to ensure they have access to healthy, nutritious foods at Healthy Foods Markets (HFMs) based in FCCH facilities.



Dr. Jesse Barnes was instrumental in getting this partnership started. His passion for this project is inspiring! He said, "Helping people feel more comfortable with meals and different foods they aren't necessarily used to cooking and working with and combining

that with the ability to get people access to those foods when they're dealing with food insecurity has been really powerful."

We know that having access to healthy food — especially produce — can have an incredible impact on health outcomes for people suffering from chronic illnesses. One patient's success stands out to Dr. Barnes. Thelma has been attending the cooking classes and relies on the HFMs for healthy food for her family. After utilizing both services for a year, Thelma's diabetes is better under control! Dr. Barnes said, "It's a really impressive change to make in a relatively short amount of time and shows the powerful impact we have in the community."

This program is proving to be nothing short of a success. Since its inception, the program has grown into five other clinics and distributed over 34,000 pounds of produce to patients in need. Roadrunner Food Bank and FCCH are working to add HFMs at the remaining three locations by August 2021.

To learn more about our HWI, visit www.rrfb.org/hwi.



Study Projects New Mexico Food Insecurity Rates Amid Pandemic

The pandemic will have had a devastating impact on people facing hunger in New Mexico, according to a recent study by Feeding America, the nation's largest hunger relief organization. **The Impact of the Coronavirus on the Local Food Insecurity** study is the first to explore how food insecurity may increase in 2020 due to COVID-19.

Pre-pandemic, here in New Mexico — 315,990 people, including 114,180 children, did not have adequate access to nutritious food to live a healthy life. The study shows the number may grow by 118,580, including 48,780 children. That means approximately 434,570 (21 percent, or 1 in 5) New Mexican people may experience food insecurity in 2020, including 162,960 children (1 in 3).

"Families continue to reel from the economic impact the pandemic created — devastating their income and finances. New Mexico families are struggling to afford all their family needs including food," said Mag Strittmatter, President and CEO of Roadrunner Food Bank. "As unemployment remains high, we will continue to provide food to communities all across our state so that none of our neighbors who are hungry are left out. So many of our friends and neighbors are *living* a life-changing event that brought them face-to-face with hunger for the first time in their lives."

Overall Population: Three Counties with Largest Food Insecurity Increases from 2018 to 2020

- McKinley County: 22.1 percent to 27.5 percent
- Luna County: 21.8 percent to 27.5 percent
- Cibola County: 19.4 percent to 26.3 percent
- TWENTY-THREE Counties have overall hunger rates of more than 20 percent.

Child Population: Three Counties with Largest Increases from 2018 to 2020

- Catron County: 34.8 percent to 47.4 percent
- Luna County: 33.9 percent to 44.1 percent
- McKinley County: 34.5 percent to 44 percent
- EIGHT Counties have childhood hunger rates over 40 percent!

Local economic experts predict it will take FOUR years for New Mexico to recover.* Families will struggle to recover lost income and financial wellbeing with no or very little work, while balancing the needs of their family throughout this crisis.

**Albuquerque Journal article, July 15, 2020, Experts: Virus is likely to inflict prolonged economic pain on NM.*



Donor Spotlight: National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC)

In March, our world changed with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. As it became clear that COVID-19 was here to stay for a while, the NALC was forced to cancel their Annual Spring Food Drive — Stamp Out Hunger. But that didn't stop them from making an impact and helping Roadrunner Food Bank!

Marie Montañó is the local food drive coordinator for Branch 504 here in Albuquerque. She told us, "The food drive is one of my passions personally." She has been helping coordinate food drives with the NALC for 27 years. "We have donated over one billion pounds of food in that time," she said.

In light of the food drive's cancellation, the local NALC wanted to make sure that they were still able to help their community. Montañó said, "We see these people every day and we wanted to make sure our customers were taken care of. With people not working, we know the help is needed and we wanted to help out Roadrunner Food Bank."

The Association adjusted their plans and had a fund drive. They encouraged each other to raise funds and successfully collected \$10,251! One letter carrier donated \$551 in honor of his guru's 551st birthday.

The NALC's Annual Fall Food Drive will also be adapted in light of the pandemic. Keep an eye on www.rrfb.org to stay updated and learn how you can get involved.

The Unseen Complexity of Food Banking

When food comes to the Roadrunner Food Bank warehouse in Albuquerque, it isn't immediately placed on a truck for distribution. It requires storage while volunteers and staff sort and repack the food. As a result, our operations staff uses vertical storage (shelving) whenever possible in order to triple floor space. This requires warehouse equipment like pallets, pallet jacks, scales, chargers, hand trucks and so much more.

Once the food is prepared for distribution, it may remain stored for a brief period and the vertical storage is labeled with a barcode printed by staff. To prepare for distribution, staff scan the tags to find the correct products and use equipment like forklifts and scissor lifts to pick orders for partners. The food is taken to a dock where one of our semis waits to be loaded.

At the dock, we have ramps and dock plates that help ensure that our staff remain safe as they use pallet jacks and forklifts to load the product. Once loaded and secured, one of

our 14 CDL drivers starts his journey to one of the 16 New Mexico counties we serve directly.

Our CDL drivers put hundreds of thousands of miles on our trucks each year. And CDL drivers are in high demand. After 19 years of service to our community, Tom Chavez, CDL driver, hung up his keys for the last time in August. Tom reflected about his time at the food bank, "I've watched Roadrunner grow into a great organization. It's something that I'm proud to be part of." While we're so excited for him to move to his next chapter, our operations team is already feeling the void while we search for a new CDL driver.

These complexities can be challenging, but grants and gifts of funds make it possible for our team to replace worn out equipment and to purchase additional items to help keep this complex operation running effectively and efficiently as we work to solve hunger.

To learn more about the food bank's operations, visit www.rrfb.org/food-banks-work or www.jobs.rrfb.org for open opportunities on our team.



Our Role During the Pandemic

Since the start of the pandemic, Roadrunner Food Bank has been in the midst of responding to the economic fallout created for so many of our fellow New Mexicans. As businesses temporarily closed to comply with public health orders, so many were furloughed or simply lost their job outright. The loss of wages has meant that new faces — never before seeking food help — are now in our food lines, often for the very first time in their lives. And yet for others, it has meant reductions in work hours limiting paychecks and straining the family's monthly income.

The pandemic has also created drastic shifts in how we work every single day. In our warehouse, food is now pre-boxed to account for COVID-19 safety measures. Before the pandemic, our food was typically provided to partners with a mix of food products on pallets. This method allowed for distribution sites to create a farmers market-style distribution. It is a preferred method of providing food because it allows clients a larger selection of food items and provides clients choice to “shop” for their family's needs.

In the first few months of the pandemic, corporations cancelled community-based volunteer activities and so many of our senior volunteers understandably couldn't risk being exposed to the virus. Immediately, our staff stepped up efforts urgently asking the community for help. Today, volunteers go through a screening process prior to their scheduled volunteer time. They must be in good health, free of illness and have not been exposed to anyone with the virus. Staff regularly take temperatures, create volunteer projects inside the warehouse (with social distancing top of mind), establish virtual volunteer opportunities and so much more — all to ensure services continue to be available to people struggling with hunger.

And the changes didn't stop there. When state public health orders started, our staff began identifying ways we could train partners and shift to pandemic-safe food distribution models. It meant a move to create contactless, drive-through food distribution. Within a short time, our staff began implementing virtual training for our partners, opening new large-scale drive-through food distributions, and urging partner sites to stay open to serve New Mexicans facing hunger. Coordinating these

activities with hundreds of hunger relief partners was critical in continuing to provide food.

Many of our food distribution partners were impacted right away as they were compelled to close because of the limited volunteers and safety concerns about the spread of the virus. In the early months of the pandemic, 20 percent of our partners temporarily closed. It meant we needed to start distributions in many counties to meet the existing and increased need. Quickly we opened temporary contactless, drive-through mobile distributions in Bernalillo, Luna, Otero, Socorro and Valencia counties.

The drive-through distributions allow us to safely distance our clients, volunteers and staff. Clients stay in their car the whole time. Each client registers, pulls into a loading area where multiple food boxes are placed in a trunk or back seat, and then drives away — with very limited or no contact.

In the midst of all the changes, we have experienced a lack of consistent food supply availability, drastic increases in food costs for items we purchase for distribution, and requests to increase food distributions to tribal communities severely harmed by the virus.

The vast number of changes made in this unusual time has been possible thanks to our generous community. As the pandemic continues, your support helps us maintain our expanded services for so many new faces in our food lines. Thank you for investing in our mission, thank you for helping us provide a basic need that we all have — access to food.

For updates on our pandemic response, please visit www.rrfb.org or call 505.349.8909.



Before



After

The Walmart Foundation Grant Helps Continue and Expand Produce Rescue

Working together with corporate partners in our community is one of the ways that Roadrunner Food Bank is able to serve food insecure individuals in New Mexico. Often, our ability to expand our services, and replace or update equipment, is because of funding from these partners.

In 2018, Roadrunner Food Bank worked in tandem with Feeding America to begin rescuing millions of pounds of produce from the port in Nogales. We purchased a tractor-trailer that made it possible for us to transport loads of fresh, healthy and nutritious produce from Nogales, AZ to our Albuquerque warehouse. The produce is sorted, repacked and prepared in our warehouse. Then it is stored until it is ready for distribution to our member partners.

Through this program, the food bank rescued millions of pounds of produce to help feed our hungry neighbors. It was so successful in the first year, that the food bank needed to apply for a grant

to continue. In July 2019, the Walmart Foundation came on board and awarded a grant to continue the program and help build its capacity.

The funding helped us purchase equipment for our warehouse, like vertical storage, which allows us to triple the amount of food we can store at any given time. The funding also helped us upgrade our electrical system and convert one of our refrigerators into a much-needed freezer. Freezer space is vital to the food bank's ability to keep certain foods at proper temperatures prior to distribution to our partners.

Thanks to the generosity of the Walmart Foundation, we are able to run this program and are excited to see its future successes.

To learn more about food rescue, visit www.rrfb.org/how-food-rescue-works.

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