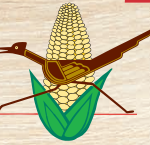




THE ROADRUNNER ROUNDUP

**ROADRUNNER®
FOOD BANK**
OF NEW MEXICO



MEMBER OF
**FEEDING
AMERICA**

Spring 2021

A Message from the President and CEO



This past year has presented a unique set of challenges for us all. While there are signs that things are improving a little more every day, there is a level of uncertainty moving forward too. For so many of our fellow New Mexicans, the pandemic has had rippling effects not just on their health, but how they will continue to provide necessities for their family, including food. The Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that unemployment in our state remains at 8.2 percent in December 2020 compared to 3.6 percent from December 2019.

Without enough jobs, families are continuing to face financial devastation, limiting their ability to afford all the things we need to thrive and survive in this world. Local and regional economists are predicting it will take years for our state and nation to recover from this economically and will continue to hurt those who make the lowest wages the hardest.

“You were there when so many more people in our state needed a helping hand.”

Research from OpportunityInsights.org shows that those making less than a salary of \$27,000 a year have had much fewer jobs available to them throughout the pandemic. Additionally, the lowest-wage workers have nearly 24.3 percent fewer jobs than were available to them compared to January 2020 in our state.

For the people we serve, this means that the working poor haven't had enough money to “make it” every month or have exhausted what money they did have for other needs. It means families with

children will face deeper levels of poverty than they did before. It means that seniors with fixed incomes won't have budgets that stretch as far because of increasing costs, especially on food they purchase. It could mean skyrocketing homelessness with so many that may not have been able to pay their rent and mortgage throughout this health crisis.

In short, we know hunger in our state will remain high for the foreseeable future. The people we serve need the time to recover from the pandemic economically and that won't happen overnight.

While all of this sounds grim, I have hope because our donors, our supporters and our volunteers have been lockstep with us throughout this year-long crisis. Each of you reading this have taken the time to help this past year in so many different ways and allowed our work to continue and to expand at such a critical time. You were there when so many more people in our state needed a helping hand. On behalf of the entire Roadrunner Food Bank board and staff, truly, thank you!

As our partners in all this, we are counting on you to continue to be there for New Mexicans who need time to get back on their feet, find employment, recover their lost wages, lost savings and the loss of possibilities so many people have faced this past year. There are glimmers of hope at the end of the proverbial tunnel, but our fellow New Mexicans are still counting on us all. So, please continue to Give Time, Give Food, and Give Funds when you can. Recovering from the financial devastation will take time. With your support, we'll do our best to be there for them. After all, we are all better together.

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President and CEO

Roadrunner Food Bank Celebrates National Volunteer Appreciation Month

April is National Volunteer Appreciation Month, a time to recognize the individuals who are the heart and soul of Roadrunner Food Bank.

The history of this special volunteer recognition dates back to April 1974 when President Richard Nixon signed proclamation 4288, establishing the first-ever week-long annual national volunteer holiday.

"I urge all Americans to observe that week by seeking out an area in their community in which they can give to a needy individual or a worthy cause by devoting a few hours, or more, each week to volunteer service," Nixon stated in his appeal.

Roadrunner's volunteers do exactly that. The food bank has had volunteers still coming through the door in spite of the Coronavirus pandemic and providing important services to meet our mission.



In fact, last fiscal year more than 7,800 volunteers provided more than 32,000 hours of service to help meet the increased need we have faced since the start of the pandemic.

Staff make it a priority to ensure the health and safety of volunteers who give their time and talents to the organization while helping in our warehouse or at drive-through distributions we offer in many communities. Early on during the pandemic, our organization went through the NM Safe Certified COVID-Safe Training Program. It is one additional way that we, along with countless businesses and organizations, continue to operate in the safest manner possible during this time. Plus, we have taken and continue to adjust volunteer projects inside our warehouse, update and provide additional training to volunteers helping out, and have all volunteers perform a health screening every time they visit.

"The passion our volunteers have when they are here doing the work is inspirational," said Human Resources Manager, Candace Baca. "Everyone is so eager to make sure we are getting projects done so we help our fellow New Mexicans."

According to Mayo Clinic, being a volunteer has its personal perks. Individuals who actively volunteer have a decreased risk of developing depression, lower mortality rates and an overall greater sense of purpose in their lives. Due to the pandemic, so many are experiencing high levels of isolation, contributing to depression and other mental health issues. Volunteer activities statistically help alleviate some of this stress. By engaging individuals mentally and physically, it can lead to a greater sense of fulfillment during these unconventional times.

Roadrunner Food Bank and its affiliated partners always seek volunteers for many different projects. Learn more about volunteering with the food bank at www.rrfb.org/volunteer. If you are outside the Albuquerque area and want to help one of our partners in your community, visit www.rrfb.org/find-food. Use the map at the bottom to locate a partner nearest to you. Together, with you as our partners, we can help our fellow New Mexicans facing hunger all across the state! And to our wonderful volunteers, thank you! You make our world a better place!

Event Changes Due to Pandemic!

During the spring, there are typically several events we are involved in or host. Given that we are still in the midst of the impact of the pandemic, please be aware of these event changes this spring:

A Place at the Table

Every spring we host an annual fundraising breakfast called A Place at the Table. This year's event will be canceled. We anticipate the return of the in-person breakfast event in the spring of 2022. For more information on making or renewing a pledge or questions, call Andrea Nash at 505.349.5333 or andrea.nash@rrfb.org.



Stamp Out Hunger

This national food drive is hosted by the National Association of Letter Carriers and the US Postal Service. It is typically held on the second Saturday of May benefiting 10,000 hunger relief organizations across the U.S. Letter Carriers recently shared the spring 2021 event will be postponed. In the meantime, you can still help! For more information on how to donate food visit, www.rrfb.org/ofd. Letter carriers are continuing to encourage monetary donations too. Visit www.rrfb.org/letter-carriers to help make a difference!



SeedCorps Providing Essential Services during the Pandemic

In partnership with AmeriCorps and Serve NM, our SeedCorps program enhances existing hunger-relief services and programs. Throughout the pandemic, this core group of 20 plus members are based in many communities across the state and have been a vital resource that has allowed Roadrunner Food Bank to increase and expand our services during this health crisis. SeedCorps members belong to one of four teams at the food bank. Each team has a different focus area during their service year.

Team Mesquite has been working to build and expand partnerships in tribal communities and senior hunger locations that will provide specialized food boxes to both these at-risk communities. Mesquite members also lead food box build “projects” inside the warehouse that end up at drive-through food distributions. Team Mesquite’s efforts have created the second largest food distribution in our service area during the pandemic. Since October, they have run nearly 45 drive-through distributions providing more than 979,000 pounds of food over multiple locations to people struggling with hunger. Their work has touched the lives of more than 53,000 people in more than 18,000 families.

Team Piñon works specifically with our network of food distribution partners in placements in various communities. Each member works with two distribution partners, a total of 13 in all, within our hunger relief network. Just one of many examples is the support they provided to Casa de Peregrinos (a partner in Las Cruces in Doña Ana County) where 2,500 families benefited from food they received at Casa during the holiday season. Families were able to take home holiday meal preparations. Members also have helped Casa at their rural distributions in other parts of the county. The work Team Piñon has provided has been crucial to many of our agency partners during this crisis, allowing them to maintain and expand services with limited volunteer help

and increased need. Team Piñon is also filling a critical gap in Luna County where there are not currently enough partner distribution agencies. This team is running two bi-monthly drive-through food distributions in Deming, New Mexico reaching 300 families each month. Luna County is the most food-insecure county in the state with one in two children at risk of hunger and one in four people overall.

Team Juniper is the core group of SeedCorps members focused on nutrition education. They develop low-cost and nutritionally minded recipes. In addition, the members have been actively planning the menu of food items that are included in our drive-through food distribution boxes. A few of the recipes the team has created and modified for use with people struggling to afford food can be found at www.rrfb.org/recipe.

Team Aspen is brand new. These AmeriCorps members are based at smaller partner food banks in Clovis and Santa Fe with members recently helping at the Gallup food bank. Their role is to provide support in a variety of ways and help our fellow food banks in providing food to communities in their respective service area. The pandemic has created such an increase in hunger that additional helping hands like those of Team Aspen will be helpful in providing key support to help our fellow food banks as we maintain and expand services throughout this health crisis.

The formation of Roadrunner’s SeedCorps Program in 2018 was created to enhance our services and strengthen our partnerships that provide additional support to help low-income children, seniors, adults and families seeking food assistance at distribution locations. Their service has been crucial during this time of significant need across the state. We are proud to have created this unique AmeriCorps program at the food bank and to be a partner site with Serve New Mexico.



Meet Larissa

"We do struggle from time to time, even before COVID-19. Sometimes we just don't have the money to make it to the next payday for the groceries that are needed. I have utilized getting a food box before and right now it is just needed now more than ever."

Larissa is a single mom of two teenagers. She has a job as a social worker in New Mexico and during the pandemic, her income was drastically impacted.

Social workers can bill or charge two different hourly rates. Billable hours are allowed when a social worker has face-to-face contact with clients. Non-billable hours pay a lower hourly rate and during the pandemic have been the only available source of income for her family. It no longer covered the family's everyday needs.

She said, "Money I was bringing in every two weeks is not normally what I would bring in before COVID-19. I often have to consider, 'do I make my car payment or do I buy food?'" Or a scarier situation for her family, "Do I pay rent for a roof over my children's head or buy food?"

Larissa realizes that without food she wouldn't be able to function and stay healthy for her kids. For now, it means visiting food assistance programs until things at her work get back to normal.

And she has faced hunger and poverty in her past too. When her children were little, she realized an education could help improve their lives. It wasn't easy. It took years of starts and stops to make her dream a reality.

Larissa went straight from CNM into a social work program at New Mexico Highlands University. It took time, but she eventually received a bachelor's degree. When she looks back, she often wondered how she was going to do it. At that time, Larissa had an infant and son, was trying to stay on top of her studying, and trying to work — it was hard."

"Because my son was able to help me with his sister, I didn't have to figure out how to pay for childcare, or how I would attend school with an infant and trying to juggle a job too," she shared.

Her son helped with all those things and that allowed her to get her degree. Larissa also credits the community resources she discovered. Larissa said, "I am so grateful to Roadrunner Food Bank for having the food available for families like mine. Because of those community resources, I was able to reach the dream of getting my bachelor's in social work."

Today, the drive-through food distribution relieves stress for Larissa. She shared, "You don't have to worry about making that one-on-one contact, and the way you have it set up is awesome! You drive up, you stop your car, they put it [food] in your vehicle and you go."

And while this health crisis is still impacting so many things for all of us, Larissa knows it's going to be okay. It has to be.

See Larissa's story at www.rrfb.org/larissa.

Expanding our Work with Tribal Communities and Tribal Partners

One thing that had a spotlight shown on it throughout this pandemic is the severe effect it has had on people of color, including tribal communities. While the virus has taken a big toll on so many families who have lost loved ones, it has also significantly highlighted the wide gaps in services often not available in tribal communities. There are usually few or no grocery stores on tribal lands, access to running water can be limited if available at all and even internet access is spotty at best. The pandemic has meant that tribal communities who were already isolated became even more closed off with important protective quarantines set in place. It also highlighted another growing issue - the disparity of available resources and services of all kinds including food. Combine that with fewer available jobs in both rural and urban communities and it has significantly deepened the poverty felt by so many living in native communities.

That being said, if there was something 'good' that came out of this pandemic, it was our ability to increase partnerships and provide more food to tribal communities. Four of the state's five food banks work closely with tribal partners. Roadrunner Food Bank provides access to food to eight Pueblos, two Apache tribes and three chapters of the Navajo Nation. Roadrunner and its food bank partners provided nearly 24 percent more food to existing and new partners on tribal lands in 2020.

- In 2019, food banks provided 13.7 million pounds of food to tribal partners
- In 2020, food banks provided 17.6 million pounds of food to tribal partners

While we are celebrating this important change, we know there is more work to do. It is our priority to focus attention to more culturally appropriate foods, continue building and improving relationships with existing and new partners in tribal communities and find ways to increase fresh fruits and vegetables to native communities when cold storage isn't always possible.

If you'd like to connect us with a tribal partner you know, contact Program Support at programsupport@rrfb.org or call 505.349.5353.

Food Banks Serving Tribal Communities

ECHO Food Bank

- Portion of Navajo Nation

The Food Depot

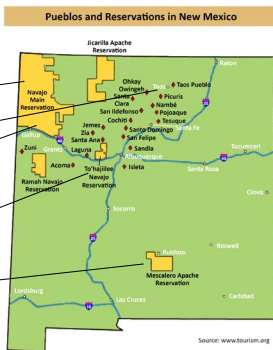
- 1 Apache Tribe
- 8 Pueblos

Community Pantry

- Portion of Navajo Nation
- 3 Pueblos

Roadrunner Food Bank

- 2 Apache Tribes
- 8 Pueblos
- 3 Chapters of Navajo Nation



Roadrunner and three of its partner food banks serve tribal communities.

