

# THE ROADRUNNER ROUNDUP

SPRING 2024



MEMBER OF  
**FEEDING AMERICA**

## Outreach Program Marks Eleven Years of Service

Our Client Services program has reached its eleventh year. It has grown and evolved far beyond its origins.

In 2013, the food bank received a grant to start a SNAP outreach program to connect clients to SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits. We knew then (and now) that it takes both SNAP and food from nonprofits like ours to provide nutrition to people facing hunger.

While hardly a newbie, Jason Riggs had been at the food bank for five years and was hired to run the program. He reached out to food banks that already had SNAP programs and before long, two AmeriCorps members joined in his efforts.

At the program's start, the recession created more food insecurity as people faced significant losses in jobs, housing, and savings. The increased need provided a second food resource and helped newly food-insecure families who qualified.

He shared, "I remember visiting food pantries all over the state with my SNAP card and clipboard. As people waited to get their groceries, I'd walk the line explaining how SNAP works. I would help someone complete an application one day, and a few weeks later, they'd share if they got approved. It was one paper application at a time."

In New Mexico, the same application for SNAP can be used to apply for other public benefits. It was a natural extension to help people apply for Medicaid, energy assistance, cash assistance, and connect them to non-food-related resources they didn't know about.

Even with volunteers, it was hard to cover much ground until the state created an online application portal. It flipped the program on its head. The team

set up a toll-free number and began assisting people with applications over the phone.

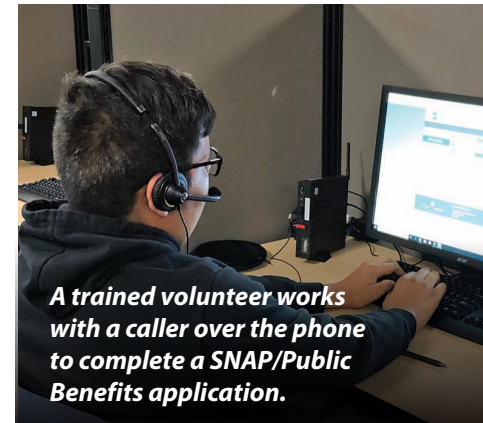
Not long after, the "HELP Center" started. It's a mini call center of six workstations with computers and monitors allowing the team to expand and offer patients application support through a pilot medical referral program.

The next iteration of the program came as a direct result of the pandemic. Our toll-free hotline exploded as new people were seeking our services, many for the first time. The state's Human Services offices also faced elevated call volumes and began sending us referrals daily to try to keep up with the requests for help.

Fast forward to today and we're back to our 'on-the-ground' operations offering in-person outreach and phone outreach providing resources, surveys, and referrals to those who need them. It's made up of staff, volunteers, and social service students (learning in real-time), as well as partnerships the team has built with numerous organizations over the years. Today, it reaches more than 1,000 families and provides 1 million meals to their families.

Every day we encounter neighbors who do not have the financial means to keep their refrigerators stocked. Our Client Services team does its best to assist with food, connect people to other services, and, at the very least, an ear to listen to the trials, tribulations, and heartache that poverty and hunger cause.

Learn more at [rrfb.org/snap](https://www.rafb.org/snap).



*A trained volunteer works with a caller over the phone to complete a SNAP/Public Benefits application.*



## Local Self-Proclaimed Farmer-Athlete Donates Produce

Kevin Biggers, a self-proclaimed farmer-athlete, donates hundreds of pounds of organic fresh produce to the food bank, all of which he grows himself.

Kevin proclaims to not only have a green thumb, but a green hand. This talent for gardening began at an early age. As a child, Kevin would help his mom harvest tomatoes, green beans, and a wide variety of fresh vegetables. It sparked a love for gardening and has followed him throughout his life.

He moved to Albuquerque seven years ago, and like every other place he has lived in - he started growing food. Kevin often sells the food he grows at local farmers markets, and when he realized he had an excess, he decided to donate the extra produce to Roadrunner Food Bank.

Last growing season, Kevin donated extra produce from his farm for 23 weeks straight. It totaled almost 1,000 pounds of fresh produce going out to families in New Mexico facing hunger. Kevin added, "People can go to stores and see all the wonderful food they cannot afford, but now they can come to Roadrunner, and they can get this nutritious organic food."

Beyond gardening, Kevin is also a seasoned athlete. In his 15th season of running track and field, he has participated in seven world championships and is currently training for the upcoming World Championship in Sweden. Last year he participated in the Huntsman World Senior Games, where he took home two gold medals and three ribbons. Kevin also set a record running the 50 meters at the New Mexico Senior Olympics.



Kevin shared, "If you have excess food, don't let it go to waste — there are many people who are in need of food who can benefit tremendously from that food."

To learn more about donating produce and other food items, visit [rrfb.org/our-food](http://rrfb.org/our-food).

## Three-Year Grant helps Team Understand High-Need Communities

Roadrunner received a three-year grant through Feeding America from Starbucks focused on equitable food access. It spotlights two neighborhoods in Albuquerque with high food insecurity rates - the International District and the South Valley. During its first two years, Roadrunner worked with a research firm to investigate food access and provided the food bank with several key findings. Now, in the grant's third year, the funding has allowed the food bank to:

- Maximize food distribution through our Healthy Foods Express model offering a wide selection of fresh produce and other nutritious food options
- Establish distributions targeting those who are unhoused
- Focus on culturally relevant foods in both communities
- Collaborate with other organizations to better understand the unique needs and strengths of immigrant and refugee populations in each neighborhood.

This three-year Starbucks commitment gave our team insight into each unique community and helped us learn about approaches that consider the culture, values, and systems that can work best to engage each neighborhood. We're honored to utilize the funds to shape our mission and thank Starbucks for giving us this opportunity to build more community-driven solutions with partners across the state.





## Meet Valerie Young

Valerie began volunteering at Roadrunner Food Bank in May of 2023 after retiring from her 40-year career as a pediatrician in Albuquerque. She's always had a sense of community, and after she hung up her stethoscope, Valerie decided to start volunteering with the food bank.

When asked why she chose Roadrunner Food Bank, Valerie said, "New Mexico is at the top in the country for hunger, especially children. As a pediatrician, I saw a lot of kids that were on the edge. So, it's very important to get food out to the community to help those who need it most. I also like that a lot of the food distributed by the food bank is fresh fruits and vegetables, which is important as many people in our state don't have easy access to those items."

Valerie shared she has also appreciated the new relationships she has made when volunteering. "I have met many people from all walks of life here, and I enjoy going out to eat with the other volunteers after our shift. I've met a lot of people through this experience that I talk to now."

Valerie added, "You are doing something really worthwhile with your time when you volunteer at the food bank. Roadrunner also makes it very easy for you to volunteer, it's easy to sign up and it's easy to change the date [of your volunteer slot]. And everything is made so that your time spent here is valuable. It also makes you feel better about yourself and the world."



## Meet Donna and Chris Green

This dynamic duo volunteers weekly. Donna, a retired kindergarten teacher of 34 years, began helping in 2020, spurred by a friend's recommendation, and instantly fell in love with the experience.

Chris was introduced to the food bank through his company's volunteer initiatives and joined a year ago. The two found volunteering to be a fulfilling way to give back to the community after their retirement.

The duo shared with our team that they appreciate the diversity of tasks they encounter every week, making each volunteering session interesting and enjoyable. They shared with us that they value the camaraderie with fellow volunteers and said it is their favorite part of helping because they get the opportunity to meet new people from all walks of life.

Donna and Chris encourage everyone to "just do it," emphasizing the fellowship within the volunteer group they have come to know and the satisfaction from the impact of their gift of time in the community.

Share your volunteer story with us during National Volunteer Month. Visit [rrfb.org/story](https://www.rrfb.org/story) to learn how.



## Meet Stella and Holden – Two Kids Stepping Up to Make a Difference

For three years, Stella and Holden have been lending a helping hand. At 13 and 11 years old, Holden and Stella began volunteering at the ages of 10 and eight when their grandma brought them in to volunteer. They primarily assist with sorting produce, a task their grandma also takes part in.

Holden shared, "I like volunteering here because it feels good to help other people," while Stella shared, "It is rewarding to know that you are helping the community."

Holden said, "I think that young people thinking of volunteering should just give it a shot because it makes you feel good, and it's fun." Stella added, "Afterward, your arms and legs might be a little sore, but it feels good to think — you know that I did a good thing today."



## Man With a Plan

Over the 2023 holiday season, Tony Orant conducted his first two food drives, delivering on a promise he made to himself back in 2014 when he and his wife moved to Albuquerque from Chicago. He recalls, "I saw a lot of news stories of food banks in trouble, and I thought when I get established here, maybe I can do something about that." About a year later, he remembered the 1978 documentary concert film *The Last Waltz*, chronicling the rock group *The Band's* farewell concert held in San Francisco on Thanksgiving Day, where 5,000 attendees were served a turkey dinner.

"There was a pre-show where they fed the homeless there and I thought, man, if I could make enough musical contacts here, I'd love to recreate something like that," he said. So, he spent the next few years making those connections, building his base of musicians, including forming his band, and saw it all come together at his inaugural show "The First Waltz," held at the historic Lobo Theatre in Albuquerque's Nob Hill.



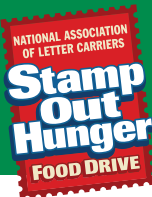
The venue expressed some doubt about how many food collection boxes Tony set up that night, thinking filling them all was unlikely. He told them, "Man, we BETTER need all those boxes!" Sure enough, the community came through with nearly 800 pounds of food between his two food drives. (The second was a New Year's Eve show in the same venue.)

Plans for *The Second Waltz* are already underway for 2024. Tony plans to hold one every year around Thanksgiving. Tony says, "Roadrunner Food Bank makes it easy for it to work. I'm glad to help out and encourage others to do the same. It's a little thing that makes a big difference to somebody."

Join in Tony's commitment and take action this summer by conducting a food drive of your own! You don't need to put on a big concert to rock out a food drive and we are here to help give you the tools you need to get started!

Visit [rrfb.org/fooddrives](http://rrfb.org/fooddrives) to learn more about hosting a food and fund drive.

## Help Stamp Out Hunger on Saturday, May 11



It's Stamp Out Hunger time! In its 31st year, this annual, nationwide food drive organized by the National Association of Letter Carriers is held on the second Saturday in May. On Saturday, May 11, Stamp Out Hunger in Albuquerque is hosted by National Association of Letter Carrier Branch 504 and they are ready to take on the work to help Roadrunner Food Bank serve those in need.

Letter carriers will work hard on Stamp Out Hunger day, delivering mail and picking up your donated food, so get your donations ready to make it easy to give. In Albuquerque, be on the lookout for a blue bag left in your mailboxes to fill. Can't find a blue bag? You can leave food in reusable bags, paper bags, other plastic bags, or even boxes.

Not sure if your post office is participating? Check with your local post office or hunger relief organization for information.

We always need volunteers to help sort food at 11 Albuquerque post office locations across the city. Please visit [rrfb.org/cervis](http://rrfb.org/cervis) to sign up or connect with Roadrunner's volunteer team and ask what you can do to help get involved. One way to help is to share the word! You can find a printable list of the most needed food items at [www.rrfb.org/donate-food](http://www.rrfb.org/donate-food). Please share the details with neighbors and help the 2024 Stamp Out Hunger food drive bring in much-needed food for those experiencing hunger.



**The ROADRUNNER ROUNDUP**

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