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*the
harvester*

FALL 2020 NEWSLETTER

WWW.FOODSHARE.COM

FOOD SHARE

ventura county



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A note from your CEO

Often it's not obvious when someone is going hungry, but with more than 1 in 6 of our friends and neighbors regularly experiencing food insecurity, including at least 42,000 children in Ventura County, it's quite likely to affect someone you know. Hakim, whose story is on page 7, is just one of many who have turned to food pantries to feed her family this year.

With thousands more people in our community in financial distress as a result of the pandemic, Food Share is busier than ever securing, storing, and distributing more than 17 million pounds of food annually to ensure no one in Ventura County needs to worry about going hungry.

Like everyone, I am looking forward to putting 2020 firmly behind us and moving forward to a brighter and more positive 2021. One of the things I have missed most in 2020 has been the opportunity to host a monthly Food for Thought lunch. I loved meeting new people from all over the county and giving an in-person tour of our facility. Until we can meet again, I've worked with our team to

put together a video tour so you can see inside our facility, meet some of the amazing staff and volunteers who make it all happen, and learn about the operation behind the largest hunger relief organization in Ventura County. You can watch it on the homepage of our website at foodshare.com. Come on in and I'll show you around!

On behalf of myself and the entire team at Food Share, have a happy, healthy, and hunger-free holiday season.



Monica White

Monica White
President & CEO

Want to know more about what Food Share does? Go to our homepage at foodshare.com and watch our new video!

Since the onset of COVID-19, your support has helped us:



Distribute **352,000**
Disaster Food Boxes



Hold **More Than 200**
Pop-up Distributions



Serve
860,000 Individuals



Rally **60,000**
Volunteer Hours



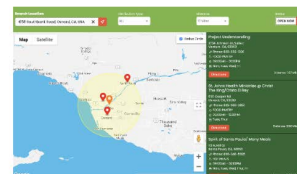
Distribute **18.9 Million**
Pounds of Food



Distribute **28,000**
Senior Kits

Download OUR NEW SMARTPHONE APP!

NEW FEATURE! Find the nearest pantry, meal, or drive-thru distribution open NOW! with the Find Food Now map.

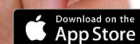
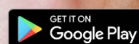


- Find food NOW!
- Sign up to volunteer
- Host a food drive
- Make a donation



Scan me

to download the app.



Search "Food Share of
Ventura County."



Join us for our 9th annual CAN-tree food drive!

We look forward to our annual CAN-tree event every year. It's a lot of fun and a critical source of food donations for the forthcoming year. For obvious reasons our 9th Annual CAN-tree Food Drive will be a little different this year but there are three ways you can make a huge contribution to our mission and still have a great time — just a little differently.

- ♥ **Collect & Build** - Host a canned food drive and collect cans to use for your tree. Each CAN-tree will require approx. 600-800 cans. Build the tree at your location and send us a photo.
- ♥ **Buy & Build** - Send Food Share the donation to purchase the cans. The cans may be picked up or will be delivered to your location for your office/family/team to build your tree.
- ♥ **Sponsor a Tree** - Food Share will build a tree for you at our warehouse with your company name/logo and include a photo of it on our website.

To register visit: foodshare.com/cantree or go to the Events tab on our app!



STAFF spotlight

Now that's dedication!

Four of Food Share's employees are celebrating more than 15 years of service with the organization. Grants Manager, Kristy Pollard; Aaron McMillan, Driver for the Senior Nutrition program; Rich Guest, Inventory Control Lead; and Andy Murphy, Warehouse Operations Manager have collectively amassed an extraordinary 76 years with Food Share, helping shape the organization's growth into the largest hunger-relief organization in Ventura County.

"Kristy, Aaron, Rich, and Andy have each helped to make Food Share what it is today," commented Monica White, President & CEO of Food Share. "The duration of their service says so much about them as people and as professionals who are committed to our mission to lead the fight against hunger in Ventura County. We're truly honored to have them in the Food Share family. Congratulations!"

WE'VE BEEN NAMED A 2020

California Nonprofit of the Year!



We couldn't be more proud to announce that Food Share has been selected as a 2020 California Nonprofit of the Year by Assemblymember Jacqui

Irwin. Food Share is one of over a

hundred nonprofits that will be honored by their state senators and assemblymembers for their outstanding contributions to the communities they serve.

Commenting on her reasons for selecting Food Share, Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin commented, **"Food Share has been leading the fight against hunger in Ventura County for over 40 years, but they have truly proven the power of their mission through meeting the increasing demand of hungry families brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic."**

She added, "Their work in distributing food to 860,000 individuals since the start of the pandemic has played a vital role in holding our community together during our greatest hour of need. For that I am happy to designate them the 44th Assembly District's 2020 Nonprofit of the Year."

Thank you Assemblymember Irwin! We greatly appreciate the recognition!



A HEARTFELT *Thanks!*

It takes a lot of people to feed a lot of people! Volunteers are the backbone of our organization and the heart behind our mission. Every hour of goodwill translates into food on the plates of our hungry friends and neighbors.

Here are just a few of the many hundreds of people who have helped Food Share feed more people than ever before in our history. THANK YOU to everyone who has been a part of our incredible family of volunteers! And a special thank you to the service men and women of the 146th Airlift Wing of the CA Air National Guard, whose incredible hard work and dedication for the past eight months has enabled us to pack more than 250,000 emergency food boxes.

We need volunteers urgently!
Please visit: [foodshare.com/volunteer](https://www.foodshare.org/volunteer)
or go to Volunteer on our app!





VOLUNTEER *spotlight* 25 years of service and counting!

Dave Bratz is one of the most beloved and dedicated members of the Food Share family. He's served Food Share for 25 years, as both a volunteer and a former member of the Board of Directors.

"You meet nice people when you volunteer," says Dave Bratz, who would certainly know this after 25 years volunteering at Food Share. Dave first became involved in 1995, shortly after retiring, when he started helping on the rescue food sorting line, boxing canned foods donated by the community. Dave then spent several years doing the daily "bread run" — setting off at 6am to collect surplus bread from food retailers across the county. "There was a lot more bread to collect back then," he notes. "Sometimes there would be so much we couldn't fit it all into the truck!"

A former electrical engineer, Dave also spotted other areas of the organization that could use his time and skills. He joined the Board of Directors in 2000, serving for eight years, during which time he made two huge contributions to Food Share's operations. The first was to conduct an electrical power survey of Food Share's premises and install a generator to keep operations running in the event of a power outage. "Organizations like Food Share have to keep going even in times of disaster, so it's critical that

there's no loss of power," he explains.

The second transformative contribution was to the food sorting process. From personal experience, Dave knew how back breaking and time consuming it was sorting hundreds of cans of donated food without a mechanized process. He found a conveyor belt contractor to fabricate a system of belts and then personally designed and adapted them to meet the exact requirements for food sorting. The system is still in place and appreciated by everyone, particularly Stevess Thomson, Food Rescue Sorting Lead, who describes Dave simply as "the man who made everyone's lives easier."

For Dave, spending time working for the benefit of others is a way of life. "It's my way of giving back to society," he says. "We all have to do the best we can. That's all we can do." While Dave has certainly met a lot of nice people along the way, we can't think of a nicer person to congratulate for 25 years of service! Thank you so much for everything!



THEN & Now!

We love the image on the top taken back in 1984 of Food Share staff and volunteers in front of what was then our brand new warehouse facility. Some things have changed a lot since then — **we now operate more than 36,000 sq. ft. of warehouse space across two locations, and we have a lot more trucks!** We had great fun recreating the image in 2020, but were reminded that some things haven't changed much at all — like the passion for our mission demonstrated every day by our staff and volunteers.



KEEPING it fresh!

Food Share partners with many organizations from large scale growers like Driscoll's to small farming collectives like Baby Root Farm to help ensure that people in need are able to enjoy the abundant fresh produce grown in Ventura County. In this issue we spotlight two of those partners, both committed to the goal of ensuring that everyone in Ventura County has access to nutritious, fresh food.



The VCAAA Senior Nutrition Garden, Oxnard

Ask Bob Mancuso, Head Gardener for the Ventura County Area Agency on Aging's (VCAAA) Senior Nutrition Garden, about the type of fruits and vegetables he, and a small army of volunteers grow on a plot located next to Food Share's headquarters, and be prepared for a very long list. "We grow crops on a seasonal basis," he explains. "But, typically, we grow corn, beets, carrots, bok choy, all the different types of cabbages and broccoli, plus cauliflower, asparagus, peas, beans, turnips, probably eight or 10 different types of squash, multiple varieties of spinach, and 15-20 different varieties of peppers."

That's quite a haul from a previously unused plot of land owned by the County of Ventura. Originated in 2010, the VCAAA Senior Nutrition Garden is a collaborative effort between local government, Food Share, and private businesses to provide fresh, local, organic produce to older adults throughout Ventura County. Food Share's Director of Volunteer Services, Christina Forino, recruits the hundreds of amateur gardeners it takes annually to plant, grow, and harvest such an abundance of crops.

When Bob took over the management of the garden in 2017, it was on a half acre plot and produced

around 3,500 pounds of produce a year. **Two and a half years later, the garden has expanded to 1.5 acres, the size of a small farm, and is projected to produce over 40,000 pounds of organic fruits and veggies by year end.** And these aren't limited to typical garden variety favorites. Bob, a former chef, also likes to experiment with more unusual vegetables. "The newest crop is a root vegetable called yacón. It's high in fiber and has a sweetness that doesn't spike blood sugar. So, it's great for many of the people we serve because a lot of them are managing diabetes, or have high cholesterol," says Bob.

But it's not only health-concerns that drive decisions about what to plant. "We sometimes have requests from seniors for things that they enjoyed when they were growing up, or have a tough time finding in U.S. supermarkets, like chayote fruit and Malabar spinach," explains Bob. "We try to accommodate those requests and balance that with the most productive crops. Ultimately, the goal is to be able to produce enough food that we can donate it to other programs, in addition to our seniors."

**Just before this went to print, Bob retired to move closer to his son and grandchildren. We are so grateful for Bob's vision and passion and wish him every happiness for the future. Two new gardeners have been appointed in his place.*





Baby Root Farm at McGrath Family Farms, Camarillo

Situated on twenty acres in Camarillo at the historic McGrath Family Ranch, Baby Root Farm is part of a farming collective with aspirations beyond just making a living as farmers. “We want to improve the health of our communities,” says Mike Roberts, Baby Root’s founder. “We can do that by getting our food out there so that everyone in our community, no matter their circumstances, can enjoy it. Food insecurity is a major concern for so many people and Food Share, as our local food bank, has a long-established distribution network. We’re so proud to partner with them. It’s a natural fit.”

Pastor Duncan of Grace Harvest Church in Moorpark, one of Food Share’s network of community-based food pantries, is grateful for the hundreds of pounds a month of surplus produce from Baby Root. **The Saturday morning pantry serves between 380-440 individuals every week. “It’s a great blessing for our community and a bright spot in everyone’s week to receive these wonderful, organic, fresh fruits and vegetables,” commented Pastor Duncan.**

Mike Roberts is just happy that he’s able to continue what he sees as the legacy of Phil McGrath, whose family has farmed the 300-acre McGrath Family Ranch since 1868. McGrath’s passion for regenerative farming techniques and educating young farmers is what first inspired Roberts to leave his desk job and embark on a new career. “There are four parts to our mission at Baby Root,” notes Roberts. “To build systems of agriculture that support our community environmentally, socially, economically, and educationally. Being able to offer support to individuals and communities affected by food insecurity through our partnership with Food Share is a big part of that mission.”

Hakim's story

For the past three months, Hakim, has been attending a weekly drive-thru food distribution held by Ruben Castro Charities (RCC) in Moorpark, one of Food Share’s network of community pantry partners distributing food directly to people in need. The fresh produce she’s received alongside the box of pantry staples has helped keep her and her family healthy this year.

“It gets really hard to feed everybody,” says Hakim, a mother of five with three children still living at home. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Hakim worked at a senior center preparing and serving meals, but lost her job when the centre closed and switched to delivery-only. Already on a low income, the lost paycheck made putting enough nutritious food on the table even more of a struggle. Hakim was relieved to learn about the RCC food pantry from a friend who told her what a difference the weekly food box and fresh produce had made to her family.

“I love to cook and I don’t want to waste any food. I enjoy cooking spaghetti, and sometimes we’ve been getting bread, and things like potatoes, celery, cabbage, and zucchini, and I’ve been using that to make soup,” explains Hakim. She also remembers to pick up an additional box for a friend in need who doesn’t drive. “I hope it continues,” she says. “It has been very good to have the extra food. Thank you.”





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Ventura County**
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Thank you

TO OUR INCREDIBLE DONORS!

We have been humbled and inspired by the outpouring of support for our mission to lead the fight against hunger in Ventura County. Here are some of the many individuals and organizations that have helped support our hunger-relief efforts in a myriad of ways over the past four months.

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