

MEMBER OF
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AMERICA**

*the
harvester*

AUGUST 2022 NEWSLETTER

WWW.FOODSHARE.COM

FOOD SHARE

ventura county



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A note from your CEO

There's a feeling of celebration in this issue of Harvester! I am so proud of how, even in the darkest days of the past few years, our staff, our volunteers and our network of pantry partners pushed through what felt like the endless, dark tunnel of the pandemic with such dedication and optimism. There have been lovely spots of bright light at the end of that tunnel in the recognition we've received from Feeding America, the *Pacific Coast Business Times*, and in the award given to the California Air National Guard's 146th Airlift Wing, in part for their incredible support of our mission. We could not have fed the huge numbers we did without them.

I hope you'll join us in celebration at our upcoming **FED UP Shindig**. It's not too late to buy tickets for the event we're holding here at Food Share's headquarters in Oxnard. We've got quite the evening lined up — live entertainment, delicious food and drink from your favorite local eateries, plus a special presentation. There'll also be a tour of our facilities so that you can witness first-hand how we move 20 million pounds of food each year. You can also enjoy a behind-the-scenes tour by becoming one of our G.E.M.s. Recurring donors play a critical role in our work. Learn why in our focus on pages 4-5.

The reality remains that the dramatic rise in the cost of the basic necessities of life — food, fuel, housing, utilities — continues to cause real hardship for too many. Many people are shocked to hear that we are still feeding more than 4,000 individuals each week at our Oxnard drive-thru distribution alone. The vast majority of the people we serve are working individuals, families, and seniors on fixed budgets who, without the compassion of supporters like you, would go without food to make ends meet.

On my office wall I have a maxim that I think beautifully encapsulates the belief that connects all of us together in our mission to ensure that no one goes hungry — *If not us, who?* I trust that our friends and neighbors in need can continue to count on you.

With gratitude,
Monica White
Monica White
President & CEO



Let's Play

Back in May, our CEO Monica White, Chief Development Officer Jennifer Caldwell, Agency Relations Manager Pam Castro, and Facilities Coordinator Ed Skains competed on the Game Show Network's fifth season of *America Says!* The invitation to compete came via a fellow Feeding America food bank and was a great way to put the fun in fundraising! The four headed down to a studio in Burbank, and the "Food Share Squad" went head to head against "The In-laws" in a fierce competition of who could answer the most questions correctly! After a nerve-wrackingly slow start, the Food Share Squad pulled ahead of their competitors and made it to the one-minute buzzer round, walking away with the full prize money of \$15,000! Let's give them all a big round of studio applause!



Awards Time!

Food Share Receives Award From Feeding America for Outstanding Service During COVID-19 Pandemic

Food Share has been recognized by Feeding America, a nationwide network of more than 200 food banks, for excellence in network building — in particular the care the organization has shown to its staff for their work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Food Share is one of just six out of 200 food banks to receive national recognition.

During the pandemic, Food Share created an employee engagement committee that has implemented a number of popular programs, including employee family picnics, half-day Fridays, a revamped holiday schedule, cornhole tournaments, branded apparel, staff lunches, and an upgrade to the organization's 403(b) program. "Taking the time to encourage our staff and volunteers and appreciate their hard work has given us a shared sense of tackling the mission together," commented Monica White.



We're a Best Place to Work

We are honored that the efforts made to ensure that our team feels appreciated and enjoys coming to work has also translated into Food Share being recognized as a Central Coast Best Place to Work by the *Pacific Coast Business Times* for the second year in a row. Woohoo!



Congratulations and Thank You to the 146th Airlift Wing



Congratulations to the California Air National Guard's 146th Airlift Wing, which recently beat out 89 other Airlift Wings across the United States to receive the Maj. Gen. Stanley F.H. Newman Award. The award is given annually to the most outstanding Air National Guard wing and was awarded in recognition of the 146th's exceptionally meritorious service supporting wildfire suppression and COVID-19 pandemic relief efforts.

Service members from the 146th were initially stationed at Food Share in March 2020, for what was expected to be a three-month effort to help respond to the massive increase in demand for food assistance at a time when Food Share had lost nearly all of its volunteers. As the pandemic continued, however, and the increased need for food never waned, those three months turned into two years.

Commenting on the mission, the 146th Airlift Wing's Chief Master Sergeant, Ray Robles, a Ventura County resident whose full-time job is as a LA County firefighter, said, "I would have never thought in my whole military career that I would be involved with something like this. To see the work that we did from start to finish, from getting a can to packing it in a box to going to a distribution and delivering it to someone who really needed help and who was so, so thankful. And in addition to that, doing it here in our own backyard, in our own community, that was special."



Don't miss out!

FED UP
Annual Shindig

When: Friday, September 23
Where: Food Share Headquarters

For details and tickets go to:
foodshare.com/fedup

A RECURRING DONATION, NO
MATTER HOW BIG OR HOW SMALL,

*Makes all the
Difference*

Leadership consultant Gloria Miele, Ph.D., lives in San Diego now, but the Camarillo native remains devoted to the county where she grew up — especially when it comes to Food Share of Ventura County. “I feel like I’m part of a long legacy of community supporters,” Miele said. “My mom was a Food Share volunteer in the ‘80s and would help with food distribution, back when it was mainly government cheese — those big blocks of Velveeta.”

Food Share has evolved, now offering a variety of healthy fruits, vegetables, protein and canned goods, and the Miele family donation has also changed. After the COVID-19 pandemic created hardships for so many, Miele and her husband decided to set up recurring monthly donations.

“My husband and I are both white collar professionals who were able to work from home with no disruption to our lives such as our ability to eat,” she said. “When we saw the amazing need and the lineup of cars as people were losing their jobs and couldn’t eat, we said, ‘We have to throw down.’”

“Donors who give on a regular basis, whether that’s weekly, monthly or quarterly, are critical in helping to provide us with a stable source of funding.”

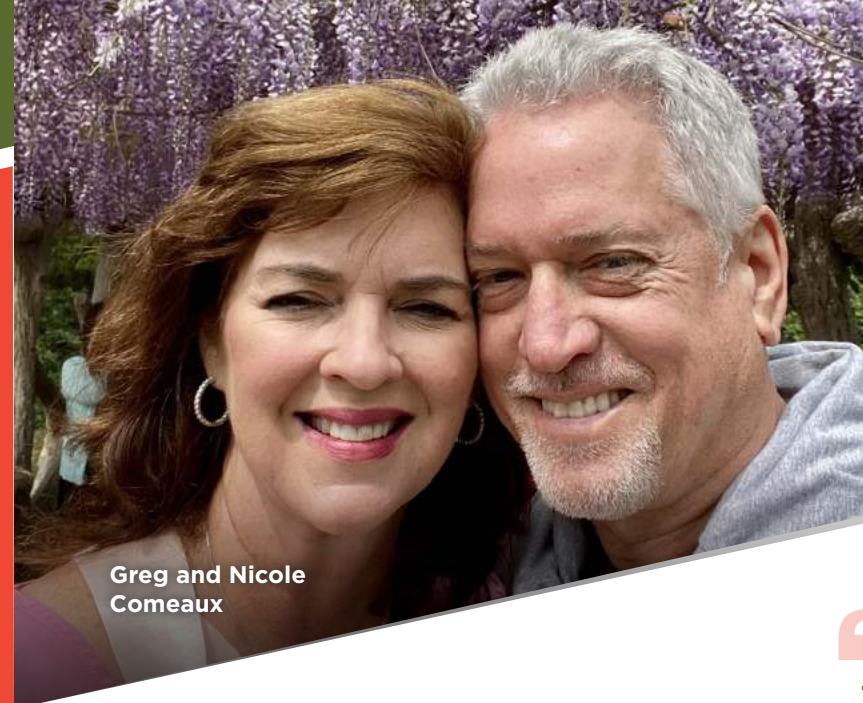
- Monica White

No matter the size, making it a regular, recurring donation helps Food Share enormously, according to Food Share President & Chief Executive Officer Monica White. “Donors who give on a regular basis, whether it’s weekly, monthly, or quarterly, are critical in helping to provide us with a stable source of funding,” White said. “That’s been particularly important in recent years with disasters like the Thomas Fire and the pandemic when we’ve needed to rapidly expand our operations to provide an emergency response. Having a predictable income stream allows us to be nimble and responsive to immediate needs.”

Recurring donor Janie Douglas, 73, of Camarillo, has always worn her heart on her sleeve. Now she wears two hearts: one on each forearm. “I got my first tattoo at 70,” she said. “It’s a blue heart. And I have another that’s pink and blue.” The pink and blue represent the types of cancer that Douglas’ mother and grandmother had, and the blue is for the colon cancer her daughter is fighting now.



Gloria with her mom
and husband.



Greg and Nicole
Comeaux

Despite what her family is going through, Douglas’ compassion continues to extend beyond her family to the larger community — especially when it comes to Food Share. “I see people out with signs asking for money for food,” she said. “I’m a sucker for that kind of request. Just because I know people are hurting. I just help.”

Now that Douglas is retired, she is able to spend more time with her family, which consists of her husband, Kevin, four adult children, eight grandchildren, and her ex-husband, who plays poker with Kevin. She also now has more time to volunteer with Food Share, packing food boxes or manning one of the pop-up pantries around the county, with Kevin joining her when he can.

The couple decided to set up recurring donations for Food Share for one simple reason: there are people in need. “I find it frustrating that most people need to actually experience hunger in order to understand it,” Douglas said. “The need keeps rising — especially our senior population. With all I’ve read and seen during my experience volunteering with Food Share, life happens.”

For Greg and Nicole Comeaux of Newbury Park, setting up recurring donations made sense to both their heads and their hearts.

From a practical standpoint, Amgen, where Greg works in human resources, matches his donation, and setting up recurring donations is easy. “It’s so convenient,” he said. “You just set it up and forget it.”

The regular donations Greg and Nicole make come from their hearts, too, as neither can imagine how difficult it would be to lack something as fundamental as food. “For me it just illustrated



Janie Douglas

“When you give, you also receive. It feels good to be a part of something so well-intended.”

- Greg Comeaux

something I pretty much take for granted,” he said. “It isn’t such a secure or assumed thing for so many.”

Greg and Nicole first volunteered for Food Share in 2018 as part of an Amgen volunteer outreach effort, and they have been a part of the Food Share family ever since. Both are devoted to their church, too, and to the acts of charity that arise from a strong sense of faith, such as a sustained gift to Food Share. “When you give, you also receive,” he said. “It feels good to be a part of something so well-intended.”

Become a G.E.M.!

To reflect the importance of those regular donations to our mission, we have a new name for our recurring givers — G.E.M.s (Give Every Monthers). Become a G.E.M. and you’ll get early access to event tickets, an invitation to an exclusive, monthly lunch and behind-the-scenes tour with our President & CEO, Monica White, plus fewer solicitations from us. Visit secure.foodshare.com/gem to join.



Volunteer Spotlight

DAVE ORR GLEANING GOODNESS

Dave Orr, a volunteer who runs Food Share's gleaning program, is passionate about saving crops from being wasted. "We are so lucky to live in an area with abundant fresh food, yet so many people in our community can't afford to buy it at the supermarket," he notes. "Gleaning gets fresh food that would go to waste onto the tables of people who really need it."

Dave started gleaning with Food Share about eight years ago. What started as one day of volunteering turned into a three to four-day-a-week commitment. The loss of volunteers due to the pandemic turned that into five to six days a week during the peak harvesting months. Even during the height of the pandemic in 2020-21, volunteer gleaners did 173 picks, collecting 125,820 lbs. of fresh produce including avocados, limes, and oranges.

"I see the gleaning program as a multiple win for all involved," explains Dave. "First and foremost is the benefit to those who can use the fresh fruit. Next are the gleaners who feel a sense of satisfaction in helping the community. And then the home owners who can feel good about donating their fruit and who also help spread the word about Food Share and its mission."

We are so grateful for your commitment, Dave, and to all of our volunteer gleaners! Thank you for your incredible hard work and for being such a great ambassador for Food Share.

"Gleaning gets fresh food that would go to waste onto the tables of people who really need it."



What is gleaning?

Simply put, gleaning is picking leftover crops. That might be crops in a farmer's field, leftover food at a farmer's market or fruit on trees in our neighborhood backyards. Picking leftover crops for the local community was an essential part of farm life and the harvest process for thousands of years. It is even mentioned in the Bible.

Why is gleaning important?

Gleaning helps farmers and anyone with excess fruit on their backyard trees to reduce food waste. Farms account for 21% of all food waste in the United States. It also helps stop lots of squishy, rotting fruit in our local backyards, which attracts rodents and insects.

Do you have trees that can be gleaned?

If you're interested in having someone glean fruit from your trees, call 805-983-7100 or visit foodshare.com/gleaning

Local Students Help County's Homeless Population

A group of enterprising 7th and 8th graders from Cabrillo Middle School partnered with Food Share in a project designed to make life a little easier for the county's unhoused population.

Saanvi Joshi, Hendrix Lowder, Jane Kim, Jude Curtis, Izzy Quiroz, Maddie Wicks, Maverick Cheatham, and Aarana Khanavkar, all members of the school's "Rusty Sailors" Robotics Club, visited Food Share to get a better understanding of how the food bank works and learned about Food Share's "Kitchen-Free" program that provides bagged, nutritious, no-cook food



for people without access to a kitchen. Food Share has distributed 24,000 kitchen-free bags to date through their network of 190 pantry partners.

Following the field trip, Laurie Lowder, one of the club's coaches, witnessed two men on bikes struggling to carry the branded Food Share bags, and the experience inspired the students to think of ways to improve the design to make them easier to transport. The result is an ingenious and inexpensive modification that turns the existing handled bags into a backpack.

Speaking about the innovative design, Hendrix Lowder, 13, said, "We got empty bags from Food Share and after our team developed a prototype, we got a grant to make one hundred bags so that we can hand them out to people who are homeless. It's very exciting to be able to see the project all the way through."



Staff Spotlight CHRIS WASSEL, DRIVER

Chris has been with Food Share for over ten years. He's done a variety of jobs during that time — starting with the reception desk, before moving to the warehouse and now delivering truckloads of food across the county.



Why do you work at Food Share?

Because it gives me the opportunity to help people in need. There's no more important work than that.

What's the best part of your job?

I love my job. The people I work with are amazing and very giving. The best part though is the same as why I work at Food Share - being able to make a difference in our community.

Tell us something we don't know about you.

I'm a grandfather of two. They are my world.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO SHOW YOUR SUPPORT!



BECOME A G.E.M.

Become a recurring donor with a monthly or quarterly donation. Give Every Monthers (G.E.M.s) are critical to our mission because they help us establish a reliable revenue stream throughout the year. G.E.M.s receive fewer requests from us, and get early access to event tickets PLUS an invitation to an exclusive, monthly lunch and behind-the-scenes tour with our President & CEO, Monica White. Visit secure.foodshare.com/gem



VOLUNTEER

Join our family of volunteers. Volunteers are the backbone of our work. We can't operate without the thousands of people who give their time to us each year.



HOST OR DONATE TO A FOOD DRIVE

Donate canned food at a food drive. Donated cans are critical to our operation. They help reduce the amount of food we need to purchase and enable us to provide variety to those we serve.

Find us online!



Welcome New Board Member YISSEL BARAJAS



We're thrilled to welcome Yissel Barajas, Chief Human Resources Officer for Reiter Affiliated Companies (RAC), to Food Share's Board of Directors.

As part of her role at RAC and her personal passion, Yissel participates in community projects that impact the farm worker community. The daughter of farm workers, she has a personal commitment to health, housing, and other issues impacting the quality of life of the farm worker community.

In addition to joining the Board of Food Share, Yissel serves on the Ventura County Farm Worker Resource Program Committee, the Innovation Committee of the Museum of Ventura County, the UC Davis Western Center for Agricultural Health and Safety External Advisory Board, and the Board of the California Agricultural Leadership Foundation.

"I was inspired to join the Food Share Board because I benefited from food assistance programs growing up. The role Food Share plays in addressing food insecurity is so important for our communities. I'm excited to work with the Board and partner with community stakeholders, especially the agriculture industry, to support the mission of Food Share."

**FOOD
SHARE**
ventura county

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