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# FOOD SHARE

ventura county

*the  
harvester*

**NOVEMBER 2022 NEWSLETTER**

[WWW.FOODSHARE.COM](http://WWW.FOODSHARE.COM)



## *inside this issue*

**A NOTE FROM YOUR CEO**  
PAGE 2

**HOW HUNGER AFFECTS OUR  
FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS**  
PAGE 3

**THE STATE OF HUNGER IN  
VENTURA COUNTY**  
PAGE 4-5

**VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT**  
PAGE 6



# A note from your CEO

Hunger affects people from all walks of life. With 1 in 6 people in Ventura County without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food, it likely affects people you know; people like Gina and Jessie, whose stories you can read on page 2, and the Navarette family, featured on our front page.

To understand the scale of need across Ventura County, check out our Impact Report on pages 4-5. You might be surprised by how many people in your community are struggling with food insecurity. You might also be surprised by how many food pantries there are in your neighborhood — in senior centers, college campuses, and places of worship.

Our pantry network provides a lifeline in so many ways. Many people carry huge amounts of shame about seeking food assistance, but thanks to the efforts of the incredible volunteers who run these pantries, people in need not only receive nutritious food, they also receive compassion and connection. Hunger may be a ‘hidden problem,’ but the people in our community know that they are seen and will be treated with dignity.

Last year we distributed nearly 19 million pounds of food, and since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, we’ve distributed over 45 million pounds of food. That’s more than 38 million meals. The need is real. And we can’t do any of it without the support of donors. We’re currently spending around \$2.5 million per year just on buying food, an increase of 316% since the start of the pandemic. Without the financial support from our incredibly generous community, a lot of people would be going hungry.

I hope that we can continue to earn your support. It means a world of difference to our friends and neighbors in need. As always, please reach out to me at [mwhite@foodshare.com](mailto:mwhite@foodshare.com) if you have any comments or suggestions on how we can continue to ensure that no one in Ventura County goes hungry.

With gratitude,  
*Monica White*

**Monica White**  
President & CEO



# How Hunger Affects our Friends and Neighbors

## Gina’s Story

I’ve lived in Simi Valley for approximately 15 years. I’m a single mom of five kids, three biological and two that I’ve adopted. I started coming to the food pantry three or four years ago.

At one stage, my ex-husband and I had a very successful business. When he left, I had no funds to take care of my children. I’m not homeless, so I felt like I couldn’t go to a food pantry. But it didn’t matter. I needed help to feed my kids. So I put my pride down and I started looking for help and I found Food Share.

We come here weekly. The staff has been phenomenal. They reach out. They see you, they make you feel wanted, they make you feel as if you’re part of their family too.

We’ve gotten chicken and fish from here. Last week we got some plant-based meat which was great as my daughter, Gianni, is vegetarian. I just figure out meals based upon what we get. There’s a variety of fruits and vegetables, sometimes salads. It depends on what’s in season. The food we get here supplements my regular food shopping. It’s hard to afford good quality food that’s healthy.

At Thanksgiving last year, we got a turkey with all the fixings and I would not have been able to afford it last year. I was really struggling. We felt so blessed.



## Jessie’s Story

I live with my husband and we also have one of our older granddaughters living with us, along with her son and her daughter. My husband is a massage therapist and I’m a manicurist so work has been off and on. We had to figure things out. How to, you know, pay Peter without robbing Paul.

When I started coming to the pantry I was just excited. I would get back home with my food and would say to my granddaughter, look what we got! Nutrition is very important to us. And especially my granddaughter with her little ones, you know, trying to train them up to take better care of their bodies by eating proper foods. The kids love strawberries, they love grapes, they love tomatoes, they love cucumbers. That’s one of the great things about my great grandchildren. They like vegetables!

I tell people, just come, you’ll see how it will help you and your family. Because the cost of food and gas now, it’s up there. Being a part of the Food Share program allows us to be able to receive the items that we do, and take our funds and focus on other critical bills that need to be paid. It helps out a great deal financially.



Gina and her daughter, Gianni



December 1-4. The magic of CAN-tree returns for its 11th year at Figueroa Plaza in Downtown Ventura. Over 300 trees will line the plaza from over 100 different businesses and groups. Multiple registration options, including one that’s FREE!



Scan the code or visit [foodshare.com/cantree](https://www.foodshare.com/cantree) for details.





# 2022 Impact Report

See How Hunger Impacts Your  
Local Community



Food Share is serving three times the number of people it was pre-pandemic. Most are low-income working families, living paycheck to paycheck, and seniors existing on a small fixed income, who are being pushed to the financial brink by escalating food, fuel and housing prices.

The latest figure (total served for 2021) is a little over 220,000 individuals seeking assistance via our network of pantry partners, plus people attending emergency drive-thru distributions, programs like Community Markets, and farm-workers receiving food at field distributions.



## 2021 Hunger Relief in Ventura County

	Pounds Of Food Distributed	Equivalent # Meals Provided	Retail Value Of Food Distributed*	# Emergency Food Boxes Distributed	# People Served	% City Population Served	Distribution Locations	% Total Pounds Distributed**
Camarillo	594,800	495,667	\$1,575,982	5,316	3,735	5.5%	16	3.1%
Fillmore (With Piru)	602,127	501,773	\$1,595,396	1,782	5,544	31.2%	21	3.2%
Moorpark	1,873,486	1,561,238	\$4,963,989	7,180	7,158	19.6%	15	10%
Ojai	256,638	213,865	\$679,988	871	3,158	22.3%	10	1.3%
Oxnard	9,125,152	7,604,293	\$24,178,003	93,853	99,542	48%	115	48.2%
Port Hueneme	66,978	55,815	\$177,465	N/A	5,462	24.8%	3	N/A
Santa Paula	1,299,761	1,083,134	\$3,443,847	7,545	10,339	34%	24	6.8%
Simi Valley	1,237,266	1,031,022	\$3,278,154	750	11,604	9.2%	25	6.5%
Thousand Oaks	1,583,090	1,319,242	\$4,194,555	1,500	26,842	21%	27	8.3%
Ventura	1,589,987	1,324,989	\$4,212,830	8,134	17,702	16.3%	45	8.4%
Westlake Village	652,548	543,790	\$1,728,991	N/A	884	10.8%	4	3.5%

All data is for calendar year Jan 1 - Dec 31, 2021  
\*The estimated value at full retail price of the distributed food  
\*\*Food Share distributed a total of 19 million pounds of food in 2021



# Volunteer Spotlight

## GINA HOWEY AND WALTER BURSTEIN

Gina Howey and her husband, Walter Burstein, were busy family doctors in Ventura County before they went into semi-retirement and began volunteering with Food Share in 2020. They stopped to chat on their way back from an early morning “bread run” about Gina’s passion for truck driving and how food insecurity can hide in plain sight.

“A Harvester newsletter came to the house, and I was reading about volunteer opportunities,” says Gina Howey, explaining how she and her husband, Walter Burstein, found a new occupation “doing the bread run” every Monday morning. “I saw one of the opportunities was to drive a truck. I always really liked driving to the point that my mother-in-law had a joke with me that if medicine didn’t work out, then Plan B was to be a truck driver. It was a perfect fit!”

For the uninitiated, “doing the bread run” is a little misleading as it involves picking up unsold food of all types, not just bread, from retail partners like Vons and Ralph’s. Several teams do the run every Monday morning and the resulting food supplements the bulk staple items that Food Share purchases with a more diverse selection of foods, including bread, meat, and dairy products. Gina and Walter measure the temperature of refrigerated foods and, provided it meets safety regulations,

“Good nutrition is critical to good health and so it makes me feel great to volunteer here and be a part of helping families access healthy food.”

work with the retail staff to get it loaded and transported back to Food Share.

“It’s such a sense of accomplishment to have the truck empty and then by the time you come back, it’s just full of food that’s not going to go to waste and that’s really helping people. Plus, it’s nice to get some exercise for a good purpose, instead of just going on the treadmill,” laughs Gina.

As doctors, the couple have seen the impact of food insecurity on health and well-being. “A lot of times people are eating badly because they don’t have the money to buy vegetables and fruits,” observes Gina. “Good nutrition is critical to good health and so it makes me feel great to volunteer here and be a part of helping families access healthy food.”

She’s also seen first hand how hunger can be a problem hiding in unexpected places. “I had longtime patients - a couple. They were well off and would talk about trips they were taking and the restaurants they would go to,” Gina explains. “Some years after the husband passed away, I saw the wife and she had lost a lot of weight. I couldn’t figure out why until she finally confessed that she didn’t have enough money for food. It was so hard for her to admit it coming from the lifestyle she had been used to.”

Gina and Walter, who are long-standing monetary donors to Food Share, have enjoyed pulling back the curtain on the operational side of food banking. “It’s well organized,” comments Walter. “From beginning to end everything is set up to run very smoothly. It’s interesting to see it from the volunteer side, and to see how your money is being used. It’s a well run machine, and the employees are fantastic.”

Well, shucks, and right back at you, Gina and Walter! Thank you for your awesome driving skills and dedication to serving those in need. If you’re interested in volunteering with Food Share visit [foodshare.com/volunteer](https://www.foodshare.com/volunteer)

## Agency Enhancement Grants Support More Pantries

Courtesy of support from Feeding America, Food Share has recently provided grant funding to 28 food pantries in Ventura County, enabling them to purchase items like refrigerators and iPads that support their operational capacity and ability to serve the community. This latest round of agency enhancement grants follows on from an initial round provided by Feeding America in 2021.

Gary Cooper, Pantry Coordinator at Sacred Heart Church Food Pantry at Cabrillo Village, wrote to express the difference replacing a ten-year-old, energy-guzzling, residential-type fridge-freezer with a commercial refrigerator has made to their operations. “The commercial refrigerator performs in the place of three residential-type units. Our monthly costs are reduced and there’s more space available in the pantry to store non-perishable food,” he wrote.

Randy Merin and Carrie McGurn, who run the Temple Beth Torah Pantry in Ventura, are equally delighted, writing, “The refrigerator has given us the ability to store more food from week to week with peace of mind when it comes to food safety. This allows us to provide a well rounded food box to our clients. Many

“The refrigerator has given us the ability to store more food from week to week with peace of mind when it comes to food safety. Many clients have commented recently about the fresh dairy that has been in the boxes.”

- Randy Merin and Carrie McGurn,  
Temple Beth Torah Pantry in Ventura

clients have commented recently about the fresh dairy that has been in the boxes along with the abundance of fruits and vegetables.”

The entire team celebrated the role of technology in speeding up the client check-in process at St. Paschal Baylon - St Vincent de Paul in Thousand Oaks. Their President, Anne Vollmer, and Pantry Manager, Paul Laroche, wrote, “We would like to thank Food Share for awarding us an Enhancement Grant for a new Apple iPad and hot spot service for one year! We are grateful for your ongoing support of our organization. Your assistance has helped us with our weekly Saturday drive-through pantry, and the new iPad has sped up our client check-in process.”

Food Share’s network of 190 food pantries are often located in community hubs like senior centers, college campuses and places of worship. Each pantry “shops” at Food Share’s warehouse, collecting food at no cost for distribution to their local population in need. Each pantry has an allotment of food based on the numbers being served.





## 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 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 [foodshare.com/give-monthly](https://foodshare.com/give-monthly)



### 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!



**FOOD  
SHARE**  
ventura county

MEMBER OF  
**FEEDING  
AMERICA**

### CONTACT US

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#### President & CEO Monica White

## Staff Spotlight

### PAM CASTRO, Agency Relations Manager

Pam has worked at Food Share for a little over nine years. She has one of the most important roles at the organization — managing the 190 food pantries and other agencies that “shop” at Food Share to provide food direct to the community.

#### Why do you work at Food Share?

I relate to the families that we serve as I experienced hunger as a child growing up in a loving and hardworking family of nine. We picked crops and I grew up in a one room shack with no plumbing or electricity. I see my own family in some of the struggling families we help. Boxes of food were placed on our doorstep when I was young and when I found out that the F.O.O.D. in Food Share's name stood for “Food On Our Doorstep”, I knew it was the right place to pay it forward.

#### What is the best part of your job?

Working with the beautiful angels throughout this county who demonstrate their compassion, empathy and love to those whose lives are on a rougher path than others. These angels are the agency pantry coordinators, Food Share staff and incredible volunteers. Being a witness to their daily actions of “giving of one's self” serves as the best sermon or inspiration that I've ever experienced.

