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# FOOD SHARE

ventura county

*the  
harvester*

**AUGUST 2023 NEWSLETTER**

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



Volunteers at the  
College Park food  
distribution in Oxnard.

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# A note from your CEO

People often ask me to explain the difference between a food bank and a food pantry. In its simplest terms, as a food bank, Food Share is a logistical hub. To imagine it visually, we're the center of a wire-spoked wheel. We acquire and store huge quantities of food in our warehousing space (18.5 million pounds last year alone). Surrounding us are the spokes of the wheel, namely the food pantries and other community-based organizations we partner with to distribute that food (at no cost to those partners), providing sustainable support to communities in need.

As you'll read about in this issue of the Harvester, Food Share also distributes food directly to the community via weekly drive-thru events, and at "mega" distributions like the one we recently held to support the farmworker community. More about that on pages 4-5. Again, we are the hub, partnering with numerous spokes — on this occasion with the United Farmworkers Foundation, the Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project, and Reiter Affiliates, among others.

All this adds up to a wealth of critical relationships across our county and beyond — the hub and

spokes that project outwards to feed **1 in 4 people in Ventura County.**

Of course, there's one other critical part that holds a wheel together and keeps it turning — the rim. The rim is you, our volunteers, and our donors. **It is only with your ongoing support, your time, and your dollars that the wheel is stable, and our ability to lead the fight against hunger remains strong.**

I hope and trust you'll continue to support our efforts to ensure no one goes hungry in Ventura County. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to me at [mwhite@foodshare.com](mailto:mwhite@foodshare.com).

I do hope I'll see you soon at the FED UP Shindig next month or at one of our monthly Food for Thought events, where you'll get an inside view of the whole mechanism!

With gratitude,

*Monica White*

Monica White, President & CEO



# Stamp out Hunger a Stamping Success!

Mail carriers across Ventura County collected a whopping 112,000 pounds of food, equaling 93,000 meals, during this year's National Letter Carrier Stamp Out Hunger® Food Drive, the country's largest one-day food drive. **Thank you to everyone who donated and volunteered, and a special round of applause for the hard-working mail carriers who did a wonderful job bringing back the bounty on a hot Saturday afternoon!**



Rochelle, postmaster at Thousand Oaks PO, and her daughter, Kiersten, who drove in from LA to volunteer



Food drives are a hugely important source of food that help Food Share provide variety for our clients.

To host or donate to a food drive near you, visit [foodshare.com/fooddrives](http://foodshare.com/fooddrives) or scan.



# It's Not Too Late to get ... FED UP Annual Shindig

# Join Us!

When: Saturday, September 23  
Where: Food Share Headquarters

For details and tickets, go to: [foodshare.com/fedup23](http://foodshare.com/fedup23) or scan.





# One Thousand Food Distributions *and counting!*

Food Share hit an impactful but sobering new milestone this summer — the organization’s one-thousandth emergency food box distribution. These boxes contain pantry items like rice and beans and canned proteins like tuna, and are supplemented with fresh produce and dairy products.

The distributions began at the start of the pandemic in April 2020, initially to offset the closure of many of Food Share’s network of pantry partners at a time of soaring need. Three years later, and with 1 in 4 people experiencing food insecurity in Ventura County in 2022, Food Share decided to continue the distributions for the foreseeable future.

## COLLEGE PARK NUMBERS SWELL

The largest is the drive-thru held every Wednesday afternoon at College Park, Oxnard, drawing more than 900 cars each week.

Kevin Herold, Food Sourcing Supervisor at Food Share, has been running the distribution for the past three years and is a familiar friendly face for many of the people in line. *“The number of people trailed off a little with the stimulus payments, but now that CalFresh has been cut back to pre-pandemic levels and inflation remains high, we’re seeing lots of new faces,”* he commented.

Kevin estimates at least a third of the cars contain families with children, and at least as many are older, low-income individuals struggling to get by on meager social security payments. One older man in line summed up the difficulties faced by so many:

*“The price of food and everything is going up so high, I don’t see how some people do it. When you’ve gotta survive, you do whatever you can and this helps a lot of people, it really does.”*  
Food Pantry Participant



Left to Right: Monica White, Food Share’s President and CEO, with Vianey Lopez, Ventura County Supervisor, 5th District, and Maria Ventura, Public Affairs Manager with SoCal Gas.



It takes 30 volunteers each week to run the distribution. Many corporate groups enjoy supporting the event.



Steve Bennett, assembly member for District 38, helped load boxes.



Yissel Barajas (left), Secretary of Food Share’s Board of Directors and Chief Human Resources Officer at Reiter Affiliated Companies, volunteered along with her family. Yissel grew up in a farmworker family, so this event was particularly close to her heart.

## FARMWORKERS FACING HARDSHIP

Farmworkers also make up a significant number of the people attending the weekly drive-thru. There are an estimated 42,000 farmworkers in Ventura County, and the deluge of rain through the first months of this year put many out of work for an extended period, causing significant hardship.

To provide additional support to these essential workers, Food Share recently partnered with the Cabrillo Economic Development Corporation, the United Farmworkers Foundation, the Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project, Reiter Affiliates, County of Ventura Farmworker Resource Group, and the Rio School District to hold a “mega distribution” for farmworker families.

The event served 1,004 families totaling a little over 4,100 people.

*“This helps a lot, because lately we don’t work much, we work but we can’t make it, due to the high increase of rent.”*

*Farm worker, Urbano, who harvests raspberries*



More than 4,000 people were served during the event.



# Program Spotlight Partnering for Public Health

In the past year, with the support of grant funding from Dignity Health, Food Share has been proud to partner with several non-profit organizations working at the intersection of food insecurity and public health in Ventura County.

With 1 in 4 people in Ventura County seeking support from Food Share in 2022, the issue of food insecurity is widespread. “But food insecurity

isn’t only about not having enough food,” notes Caitlin Barringer, Program Manager at Food Share. “It’s about lack of access to nutritious food which, in turn, causes people to experience poorer physical health and an increase in stress, depression, and anxiety. These collaborations go quite literally to the heart of this issue!”

## The Healthy Hearts Project: Helping Prevent Chronic Illness Among the Uninsured

According to the CDC, heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. The prevention of chronic conditions through the promotion of healthy lifestyles is a focus of the Corazones Sanos Project (the Healthy Hearts Project), a collaboration between Food Share, Westminster Free Clinic — a non-profit focused on providing free, preventative health services to Ventura County’s uninsured individuals & families — students from Cal State University Northridge, and the American Diabetes Association.

Over the course of 30 weeks, Food Share is providing food boxes containing heart and diabetes-friendly, shelf-stable items and fresh produce, plus incentives for WFC’s nutrition education class for Westminster patients identified as being at high risk for chronic disease. WFC also runs a weekly food pantry at its Thousand Oaks and Oxnard locations.



Community health worker, Esme, presents the client who lost the most weight with a heart-healthy gift.

“ Having access to heart healthy food our doctors, dietitian, and other health care practitioners recommend to our patients is essential for them to be well. Our partnership with Food Share makes it possible for WFC to give out free, nutritious food to 500 families coming for services each week, so all people have a chance to be healthy and thrive. ”

Commenting on the issues faced by its clients, Lisa Safaeinili, Executive Director of WFC, said:

For more information on WFC, visit [westminsterclinic.org](http://westminsterclinic.org)



Nutritionist, Yolanda (center), loves helping people learn about food.

## Gabriel’s House: Improving Food Security Among Homeless Women and their Families

Gabriel’s House is a non-profit providing emergency shelter, transition living, counseling, life skills, and career development for low and very-low-income homeless women, their children, and female Transition Age Youth from across Ventura County. Food Share’s nutrition educator, Yolanda Alvarez, has been leading monthly classes on nutrition, including how to shop for healthy food on a budget, the meaning of different “food groups” and the importance of a balanced diet, and how to prepare a range of easy, delicious, and healthy recipes.



The crunchy citrus salad has been a particular favorite!

## We’re a Best Place to Work. Again!

Food Share is honored to have been recognized as a Central Coast Best Place to Work by the *Pacific Coast Business Times* for the third year in a row! The publication conducts an annual survey among employees in the Tri-County area and then crunches the data to determine the best of the best.

Commenting on the award, Monica White, Food Share’s President and CEO, said:

“ This is the recognition that matters most to me because it’s generated by the anonymous survey responses from our staff. I’m immensely grateful this incredible, hard-working team chooses to use their many talents here at Food Share and am so happy they feel recognized and respected for the work they do. ”

Food Share’s Employee Engagement Committee, spearheaded by Food Share Executive Assistant Michelle Hatch, has instigated a range of popular staff events, including a monthly birthday celebration lunch, after-work happy hour, plus an annual and hotly contested corn hole tournament! As the team is sometimes called to work weekends and evenings, the organization provides two hours off on the last Friday of each month and also offers a matched 403b retirement account.

Interested in working at Food Share? Visit [foodshare.com/careers](http://foodshare.com/careers)





# Welcome New Board Members

We're delighted to be joined by two new members who bring a wealth of knowledge and philanthropic experience to our board.



*Jed Harris*

Jed Harris was raised in Santa Paula and obtained his bachelor's from USC (Go Trojans!) and MBA from Pepperdine University. He now owns Puretec Industrial, which provides high-purity water systems for industrial use across the Southwest. Jed has also worked overseas with landmine removal efforts in Afghanistan and efforts to protect mountain gorillas in Rwanda. He currently resides in Agoura Hills with his wife, Tiffany, and two boys, Wyatt and Judge.

## *Scott Burrows*

Scott currently serves as Chief Financial Officer at Arcutis Biotherapeutics, a dermatology-focused biotechnology company in Westlake Village. He has been in the biotechnology industry for 20 years, with previous roles at Amgen in Thousand Oaks and Shire in Switzerland. Scott started his career as a consultant at Arthur Andersen. He earned both his BA and MBA from UCLA (Go Bruins!), and is a licensed CPA in California (inactive). Scott and his wife Renee live in Westlake Village with their three teenage sons, and when not working, he can usually be found on the golf course.



## *Join us at a Food for Thought event!*

Join us for a tour of our facility led by Food Share's President & CEO, Monica White, along with either a breakfast, lunch, or evening cocktail. Learn what it takes to feed 261,000+ food-insecure people each year.  
[foodshare.com/food-for-thought](https://foodshare.com/food-for-thought)



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