

AzFBN Responds: Connecting, Organizing and Asking for Help

In the early days of the coronavirus crisis, the AzFBN team set to work doing what we do best — connecting people and organizations with resources and each other. We also acted as an information hub to everyone from our large regional food bank members to individuals calling the Hunger Hotline to find help — many of them for the first time ever.

Our mission during those months was clear: Help the food banks — and the individuals they serve — in any way possible. Support their work by finding resources that would strengthen the network as a whole.

We made sure the needs of food banks were mentioned any time special funding was made available.

We asked partner foundations, corporations and individuals to help in new and important ways, such as through in-kind donations (gifts of products or services) and financial support of the entire food bank network in the state. The AzFBN team also answered questions from dozens of people wanting to help and directed them to the best ways to make a meaningful impact.

Our AzFBN team will continue to make connections, ask for help, share nutrition information (including how to find a food bank!) and support Arizona's food banks during the long recovery ahead.



Tee Shirt Mill

Tired of all the T-shirts you wore during the stay-at-home order? Remind yourself and others to social distance and wash your hands with a new T-shirt from the Tee Shirt Mill! For each shirt sold, \$10 will come to AzFBN to help feed Arizonans struggling with hunger. Visit www.teeshirtmill.com and click on "collections" to see available styles and prices.





TuSimple Hauls Produce — for Free!



In difficult times like these when the demand for food is high, it's good to know we can count on local companies like TuSimple to help ensure food reaches our communities in need. TuSimple is a self-driving technology company making it possible for heavy-duty trucks to operate autonomously on highways and surface streets. TuSimple is hauling two to four shipments of food each week — for free! — for AzFBN and partner food banks. In March and April, **TuSimple trucks logged more than 23,000 miles on Arizona's roads, transporting everything from spinach to watermelons.** That's almost enough miles to go all the way around the world! A big thanks to our partners at TuSimple.

National Guard Activated to Help Food Banks

When COVID-19 limited the ability of food banks to host volunteers, it was an immediate problem. Who was going to build food boxes? How could food banks meet the needs of the thousands of people coming to drive-through distributions to get help? Thanks to Governor Ducey, who recognized that food banks were a part of the essential food supply chain, the National Guard was activated to help these charities in Arizona. This help couldn't have come at a better time, as food banks statewide (understandably) saw a decline in both groups and individuals who could assist.

When we knew that help was available, AzFBN's team stepped in to coordinate this response with the Arizona Department of Emergency Management to ensure requests for National Guard support were filled.

At a time when food banks are experiencing levels of need that they haven't seen in years, this volunteer shortage could have been a disaster for both them and the people they serve. Thankfully, **the National Guard was able to step in at more than 30 locations statewide**, and this help meant more food banks were able to stay open and get supplies where they were needed. A big thanks to the governor and Guard members for their assistance at a critical time!

Schools Fill the Free Breakfast and Lunch Gap During COVID-19

Nearly one of every four Arizona children is at risk of hunger. And that statistic is from before the COVID-19 pandemic. So imagine how devastating it was for families to learn that school would be dramatically different from spring break through the end of the school year.

There were immediate worries about schooling from home, and the lack of child care meant some families faced the tough choice of continuing to work or staying home to take care of the kids. But on top of that, nearly 600,000 Arizona children usually eat free or reduced-price lunch at school. Suddenly, there was a big hunger problem looming for kids.

Thanks to the quick reaction of schools, partner organizations and government, many of Arizona's kids have received food despite "tele-schooling" due to the pandemic.

At AzFBN, we worked with our national partner No Kid Hungry to get **\$280,000 out to schools that serve disadvantaged populations**. We also partnered with schools to make sure they were aware of all the food resources around them that students and their families could access, including food banks in the area and schools providing takeaway meals. And because so many schools were providing these meals, the AzFBN team worked to get large amounts of fresh produce to schools directly through our food bank network.

AzFBN also promoted **a new program called Emergency Meals to You**. This collaboration between the USDA and the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty enabled rural schools to enroll students and their families in a weekly food box delivery of 10 meals per child directly to their doorstep.

Of course, all this help was wonderful, but only if families knew about it! We worked with partners to build interactive maps, provided a number to text for local programs and promoted these options through social media, news stories and our partners.

Now we're looking to the future and trying to ensure that at least some of these programs continue to help families through the long, hot Arizona summer.

Hunger Relief License Plate

Have you seen this license plate when driving around Arizona, or do you even have one yourself? The Hunger Relief license plate costs \$25 (plus postage and handling) and benefits AAFB. **Get yours when you renew your Arizona license plate** and help end hunger one "plate" at a time. A big thanks to everyone who has this special plate. See you on the road!



Want to Help?

Visit our website and subscribe to our email list. We'll send you legislative action opportunities so that our elected officials and policymakers will hear your voice!

Contact Us

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Funds on the Way to Help Hunger-Fighting Agencies

It started with a phone call from a friend and AzFBN financial donor: "I want to do more to help rural agencies – the small food pantries that work in partnership with your large regional member food banks." This conversation couldn't have come at a better time. We had been hearing stories from across the state of food pantries struggling to remain open. Some were struggling with a lack of volunteers. Some were having a hard time adapting to drive-up models that were necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19. All were trying to cope with increased demand.

Thanks to this inspiration, the AzFBN team went to work. We raised funds from individuals, corporations and foundations to put together the C19ORG fund. With a simple application and verification of some details, **small charities that feed Arizona's hungry were able to receive a grant of up to \$10,000.** And the great news is that — because of successful fundraising efforts — there's more than \$1 million available to help! As that donor reminded us, "If everyone who has a few extra dollars would contribute what they can for those who are hungry or otherwise in need now in Arizona, the increasing devastation caused by this virus could be mitigated."

Thanks to the C19ORG donors, the entire food bank network is a little more secure today. Thank you, thank you, thank you!



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