



As 2020 closed and we enter 2021, we at AzFBN have reflected on how the coronavirus crisis brought about many abrupt changes to the way we work, but our mission remained the same – connect people and organizations with resources and each other. We were so lucky to act as an intermediary between amazing partners, both organizations and individuals, working together to respond to the pandemic.

We solemnly witnessed an increase in the number of food-insecure folks attending food bank distribution sites, but we also encountered some amazing stories of compassion and innovation during this time of crisis. Two of our member food banks began **food delivery programs** that benefited homebound people who are hungry, a project that was accelerated by the strain of the pandemic. Our **Friends of the Farm** pilot program officially launched, bringing on small farms — some of which you'll meet in this newsletter — allowing our food banks a lifeline to fresh local produce for hungry Arizonans.

Our advocacy efforts encouraged the federal government to **extend U.S. Department of Agriculture waivers through the end of the 2020-2021 school year**, which helped many parents and food-insecure families let out a small sigh of relief. We also pushed for flexibilities in the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and support for Pandemic EBT** (both related to what we used to call food stamps) to help more families put food on the table. We advocated that critical federal resources from the **Families FIRST Act and the CARES Act** be directed at food insecurity.

With the looming statistic that 1.3 million Arizonans could be facing hunger in the next year, we are so thankful for the number of organizations and people in our communities seeking to make an impact during this time. Your help is appreciated and needed as we prepare for what's next!

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AZ Together and United Health Foundation Make a Million-Dollar Difference for Agencies Fighting Hunger

Thanks to Governor Ducey's fundraising efforts and the generosity of our friends at United Health Foundation, we were able to **grant funds to 83 partner agencies of our regional food bank members** across Arizona. They were awarded up to \$10,000 each for expansion of services and COVID-19 response. Here are just a few stories of the impact these donations have made.

Foundation for Senior Living — Phoenix From FSL Program Director Karla Mortimer — "I would like the donors to know how much every dollar donated has made a difference in the lives of those in our community. During this time, our services have increased, and the need for food goes without saying. Being able to help alleviate the stress of food is so rewarding for us, and this is possible because of donors.

"Just one example is Ruby L. She's a senior who loves to help out, but in the process, she will herself often go without at times. During this time, she stated, 'I am thankful for all the extra help because with all the new expenses that I have had with the pandemic, I truly don't know how I would have made it.' Ruby historically received meals throughout FSL's congregate program. While she recovered from surgery, she received home-delivered meals. Since money has been low, she has also received food from the food bank."

Willcox Community Food Pantry "Without this grant, our pantry would be very behind in our food supplies. We would say how grateful we are for the grant money to replenish our supplies for families and school children. We would tell the funders how appreciative the families have been through these tough times."

Haven Totes — Tucson "Being able to provide nutritious food to families who are suffering is truly a blessing. This is especially true of families with school-age children, which is the focus of Haven Totes. We wish to thank the donors for their generosity. Haven Totes does fundraising throughout the year, but without these grants and the funding, it would be impossible to reach further into the community and help those families suffering from food insecurity."

Friends of the Farm: Pilot Program Shows How Farmers and Food Banks Can Work Together to Help End Hunger

Friends of the Farm is a pilot farm-to-food-bank program that **helps Arizona's small growers and food-insecure families**. With seed money from the office of Governor Ducey, we purchase Arizona-grown fruits, vegetables, dairy, eggs, and meat for distribution through our network of food banks and pantries. The focus is on planning contracts and purchasing surplus from small-scale producers to provide a reliable market that pays a living wage, offers unique variety to food bank clients, and invests in a strong local food system.

To date, AzFBN and our member food banks have worked with more than **20 farms in five counties** to acquire and distribute more than **275,000 pounds of fresh, Arizona-grown food** to families in need. Purchases are planned in additional counties and tribal communities as well.

The whole AzFBN team thanks the governor and all the farmers who have joined this new supply chain! Here are just a few examples of how this program is helping farms across the state.

Aaron Cardenas, C2ToTable Co-Op; Watermelon and Cantaloupe “One of my watermelon guys here is a heck of a farmer, but he has not found the outlets. This [program] is great for him. If this could maintain, it could really help out. We have so much acreage down here, but we don’t have the market, and then the price point isn’t at a place where you can make it. The reason farms have become ‘megafarms’ is because [with] veggies specifically, you can’t make money.”

Gabriel Cruz, Cruz Farm; Eggs from Pasture-Raised Hens “There are a lot of farmers that are struggling and are benefiting. This is a huge milestone – a huge step to help small farmers have a thriving business with really good products. This gives us a chance to win. This is very big. We’re happy to be a part of this.”

Summer White, Roots Micro Farms; Micro Greens “We are excited to be providing nourishing produce to folks that we may not otherwise have reached through our current programming.”

Sara Dolan, Blue Sky Organic Farms; Broccoli and Cauliflower “Thank you for all the support you have given us. This is finally the type of community involvement we have really been looking for since we transitioned to being a small, local grower.”

Chaz Shelton, Merchant’s Garden; Leafy Greens “COVID-19 hit us hard. It really forced us to rethink our business model,” says Chaz. “Friends of the Farm has been an absolute lifesaver for our business during the pandemic. It also allowed us to distribute food outside Pima County and to get our produce to the people [who] need it most. Making fresh food affordable and accessible is the heart and soul of our company,” says Chaz. “We’ve been lucky to leverage our partnership with the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona to get our leafy greens into the Tucson school district.”



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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!

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A Special Thank-You to Our Senator Mark Kelly

At the beginning of the pandemic, Senate candidate Mark Kelly reached out to the Arizona Food Bank Network about raising funds to support food banks and the Arizonans they serve. Of course, we said this would be fine — our member food banks had seen increased need due to COVID-19, and at AzFBN, we needed to do everything we could to support them. We were stunned by the response. As of today, **Senator Kelly has raised more than \$100,000 to help food banks statewide!**

A big thank-you goes out to the senator, the donors who gave through this campaign, and the senator's campaign staff, who put the appeal together. On behalf of the one in every six Arizonans struggling with hunger, thank you!

National Guard Help Extended Through March 2021 to Help Food Banks

During the Thanksgiving holiday week, regional food banks across the state distributed a total of **1,643,313 pounds of food** — 603,305 pounds more than last year. That's a 58% increase at the regional food banks, and it doesn't include countless more food boxes distributed by nearly **1,000 other partners statewide!** The need continues to climb. Fortunately, help has been in place and will remain until March. That help? Thousands of members of the National Guard, who have been serving at food banks since April.

The Guard made these distributions possible. With a new year comes hope and renewed grit along with many unknowns. It's so nice to know that food banks will have the support of the National Guard to help navigate what's sure to be a rocky few months. Thank you to Governor Doug Ducey and Guard members everywhere — we appreciate you!



