

## Hualapai Food Security Committee Starts a Food Pantry and Garden

The *Arizona Food Bank Network* (AzFBN) collaborates with a number of Indigenous communities as part of its mission to end hunger in Arizona. This involves working with community groups within Arizona Tribes to uncover and address root causes of local food insecurity. After collecting food surveys, analyzing the results, and planning next steps, committees are putting programs in place to reduce hunger. One example is the *Hualapai Food Security Committee*.

Peach Springs, Arizona, is the main population center of the Hualapai Tribe. **The nearest grocery store is in Kingman, more than 50 miles away.** Distance from the grocery store was a barrier before the pandemic, but this impact was heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic when food supply chains were disrupted. The Hualapai Tribe enacted measures to protect its members from COVID-19, and the need for emergency food assistance skyrocketed.

### Community members saw this need and took action.

In 2020, two local families, including the family of Cheyenne Majenty, emergency manager for the Hualapai Tribe, created an effort called, "Helping Hands for Hualapai" to deliver emergency food. As this effort continued, AzFBN began conversations with Rosemary Sullivan of the Health Education and Wellness Department of the Hualapai Tribe about convening a local committee to gather a food survey. Rosemary was interested in this collaboration, so she convened the Hualapai Food Security Committee in the summer of 2021, composed of Tribal Departments, Helping Hands for Hualapai, early childhood programs, local churches, and AzFBN.

By winter, the committee started to distribute the survey in order to gather community input about people's needs, and find suggestions for programming that would support sustainable, long-term food access. While this was ongoing, the Health Education and Wellness Department worked with the Hualapai Food Security Committee and Helping Hands for Hualapai to apply for the GATHER Food Sovereignty Grant from the First Nations Development Institute. Approved in December 2021, **this grant funded the creation of the HOPE (Helping Other People Eat) in Hwal'bay food pantry** in Peach Springs. This gave emergency food services an official home in the community and funded paid staff positions.

As the committee analyzed the survey results and reported back to the Tribal Council, AzFBN connected the HOPE in Hwal'bay pantry with *St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance* (SMFB), which helped the pantry receive a consistent source of food supplies, material support, and guidance on the operation of the pantry. As a result of this connection, SMFB has become an active participant in the committee, and has been able to collaborate with the Hualapai Tribe on a Natives Prepared grant from *Feeding America*, which supports Tribal nations to develop emergency preparedness strategies with their local food banks. Combined, these funding sources will support continued food pantry services and additional programming requested through the surveys. With distance to grocery stores recognized as a barrier, community members thought local gardening projects were needed to complement the food pantry and make more fresh, nutritious produce available to the community.

### Our Members



COMMUNITY  
FOOD BANK  
OF SOUTHERN ARIZONA



As a result, **the Hualapai Food Security Committee is creating a community garden** at the Emergency Operations Center where the HOPE in Hwal'bay pantry is located. Looking to the future, the committee hopes to create garden plots in different housing regions on the reservation to make fresh produce accessible to all, as well as to focus on harvesting nutritious, culturally important foods. The Hualapai Food Security Committee continues to be a wonderful coming together of local, regional, and statewide resources to improve access to nutritious foods based on community needs. AzFBN is excited to keep supporting the Hualapai Food Security Committee through meeting facilitation, identification of funding sources, connections with other Indigenous community gardening initiatives around the state, and whatever else the committee may identify as necessary to improve access to nutritious foods in the community!

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## Supporting the Backbone of the Food System — People Who Harvest Our Food

Reliable access to nutritious food is a basic human right, yet the families of Arizona farmworkers remain marginalized in the very system sustained by their labor.

According to the *Arizona Department of Agriculture*, Arizona is the third-largest-producing state in the country for fresh-market vegetables.

**But people who spend their days picking fresh produce to feed American consumers often struggle to access enough food for their families. Just think about that for a minute!**

Maribel Cano, a passionate local community advocate, is well aware of these challenges. In 2022, Maribel visited local fields and heard firsthand the stories of food insecurity. She learned about the unique problems that prevent farmworkers from accessing food. Transportation and time were huge barriers, with many farmworkers unable to get to local food pantries for emergency food assistance during business hours.

Maribel knew something needed to be done. She reached out to *TONATIERRA*, a grassroots community organization of Indigenous Peoples whose history is rooted in the farmworkers' struggle for social justice in Arizona that goes back 50 years.

Together, Maribel and TONATIERRA contacted local community organizations to see how they could support **mobile food distribution directly at the fields, meeting farmworkers where they worked**. Andi Barrios, member services manager at *Arizona Food Bank Network* (AzFBN), connected Maribel with AzFBN's Community Programs Manager, Laney Meeker, who brought in *St. Mary's Food Bank* (SMFB) to provide food for distribution. AzFBN also provided a grant to TONATIERRA for the purchase of many supplies needed to run a mobile distribution. With the support of field owners and community organizations, these distributions began in February 2023. The first event served more than 100 families. **The project is now called *Miltecayotl*, a name derived from the Nahuatl language that honors the farmworker community.**

Since the distributions began, Maribel and TONATIERRA have also organized donations of clothing, hygiene items, and other necessities from local community members to add to the food boxes. SMFB has also been able to increase the amount and types of food available to the community. This genuine community effort has attracted the attention and support of local groups, including several local high school MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan) clubs



whose students have volunteered at distribution events, connecting with farm workers directly to hear about the realities of their work.

Today, Maribel and the community are busy planning for the sixth distribution event serving farmworkers. They're working to increase resources, and to address challenges like fluctuating work shifts based on the seasons. For example, many farmworkers are now adjusting to working overnight shifts to avoid the heat of summer in Arizona. How do you do a mobile distribution to accommodate this? Ultimately, addressing helping farmworker families that struggle with hunger (every time we write a sentence like this the injustice is not lost on us!) has required a significant collaborative effort from advocates like Maribel. Together, they are connecting farmworkers to the services they need, meeting basic needs, and showing them that they are seen, appreciated, respected, and loved.



## We Have a "New" CEO!

Have you heard? We have a new CEO — **April Bradham!** Our team could not be more excited about this recent appointment, as we have worked closely with April for the last seven years in her role first as Director of Field Operations and then as Vice President of Member Services. With her expansive knowledge and immeasurable grace, April served our network during a time of growth — including the addition of our *No Borders No Limits Produce Program* — and unprecedented challenges, such as the food banks' response during the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.

April came to AzFBN with more than 12 years of operations and business leadership experience in a variety of industries. She holds an MBA from *Arizona State University* and a bachelor's degree from *The Sage Colleges* in New York.

"I am thrilled to guide and support the work of the talented and dedicated team at AzFBN," said April. **"Serving so many organizations united with the complex mission to end hunger is truly an honor. I look forward to continuing to help our members get food to those in need today, while simultaneously looking for innovative ways to end hunger tomorrow."**

The Arizona Food Bank Network team is just as thrilled to have you as our new leader, April!



## 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 AzFBN. **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!



## Summertime Volunteering

Summer is a tough time for all Arizonans. There's the heat, the higher electric bills, and the kids home from school all day raiding the fridge. It's even tougher for food-insecure families, which is why **food banks are always a great way to support your community during the long summer break.** How can you help? Well, by volunteering of course! Shifts are only a few hours long and also a great way to connect with other people. You can sign up as an individual or with a group if you'd like to bring your family and friends. Go to [azfoodbanks.org/take-action/get-involved](https://azfoodbanks.org/take-action/get-involved) to find one of our member food banks and sign up. Stay cool out there!

## A Client's Thank-You

Maria is a mom and grandmother, and she's been a Yuma resident for the past 43 years. She retired right as the pandemic hit, relying on her life savings and her Social Security income to make ends meet. When we asked her if that adds up to enough to get by, she chuckled nervously before answering, "Now that we are retired, the Social Security income is not enough. Things were easier when I was able to work consistently. We didn't need the help."

Maria says that sometimes she picks up temporary jobs to bolster her income, but she has relied on the *Yuma Community Food Bank* to ensure she has enough food until the next check. Since she deals with health challenges such as high cholesterol and heart issues, she appreciates the healthier offerings like fresh vegetables, fruits, and walnuts. She feels much better and has more energy when she eats healthier food. **"Summer is hard with electric bills being as high as \$300, and this pushes a lot of families, including our own, to seek out help with food. Most of us are going through a crisis with this inflation," she says. Thank you, Yuma Community Food Bank, for supporting clients when they need it most.**

### Want to Help?

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