



Education, Advocacy, and Events

The Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano serves about 149,000 hungry people each month through direct service programs and a network of 180 partner agencies. We distributed over 16 million pounds of food last year, enough for over 13 million meals. Employing a number of ways to get the community involved with our mission by awareness and outreach, advocacy and education helps serve our clients.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND OUTREACH - In addition to the hands-on work the Food Bank does to feed the hungry, we also educate and make the public and policymakers more fully aware of hunger and poverty in Contra Costa and Solano counties through several community outreach activities.

We do this in two ways: by promoting government programs that help low-income residents afford food and getting the local community involved too. The Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano works with county social service offices to raise awareness about the procedures and benefits of the **CalFresh Program**, formerly known as **Food Stamps** and nationally known as the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** (SNAP). CalFresh benefits are not really stamps: they are stored electronically. These benefits should be the primary support for people who need help with food, but half the people eligible do not receive them. The Food Bank raises awareness of CalFresh by training agencies who administer them in both counties, as well as staff members dedicated to its outreach.

The second way we raise awareness is by encouraging **Community Food Drives and Virtual Food Drives**. We organize **Traditional Food Drives** to raise more than a million pounds of food each year. These drives include Food for Bay Area Families (sponsored by CBS 5), Share Your Holiday (sponsored by ABC7-TV), Letter Carriers' Food Drive (sponsored by the National Association of Letter Carriers), Food From the Bar (sponsored by the Contra Costa Bar Association), Scouting for Food (sponsored by Boy Scouts of America), KIDS CAN (sponsored by KCRA), and the Holiday Food Drive. You can host a food drive at your business, place of worship, neighborhood, or child's school.

Through Internet-based technology, **Virtual Food Drives** allow community members to make monetary donations that go directly to the purchase and distribution of highly nutritious food as well as other grocery products that our partner agencies request most. The Virtual Food Drive helps us get more meals on the tables of hungry people faster and with less expense because we are able to purchase truckloads of new food. Virtual Food Donations are tax deductible.

ADVOCACY - When most people think of hunger relief efforts, they think of serving in a soup kitchen, making a corporate or individual donation, or organizing a food drive. Yes, all these activities are critical in the fight against hunger. But advocating for public policy is the second prong of hunger relief efforts, and its role is equally important. We encourage community members to become Hunger Advocates and help us with efforts.

Federal nutrition programs such as CalFresh/SNAP, National School Lunch Program, and WIC (Women, Infants and Children) were established by Congress and supported by efforts from hunger advocates. These programs are often under attack during budget deliberations. Without these broad-scale national programs, hunger-relief organizations would not be able to meet the needs of the many hungry people in their communities.

Hunger Advocates help us fight for these important programs by speaking out. To get started as a Hunger Advocate, call 925-771-1304 or email lsheerill@foodbankccs.org.

EDUCATION - There are several year-round efforts to more fully educate the public about hunger.

The Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano uses theatre as an educational tool by sponsoring a series of free, live performances about hunger in America. Entitled ***Hungry***, the 40-minute play reveals the story of Eric, a typical middle school student, who without enough money for food takes some heroic measures to help his family. Using music and drama, Eric's journey is a story that engages and inspires students. At the same time, they learn about the problem of hunger in our community and how it affects them. Since October 2004 *Hungry*, written by award-winning playwright Patricia Loughrey, has been presented numerous times in middle schools throughout Contra Costa and Solano counties.

We invite you to find out more about having this play come to your school next Fall or about sponsoring the play, by contacting Patty McDowell at 925-677-7026 or pmcdowell@foodbankccs.org.

September is **National Hunger Action Month** -- a grassroots movement created to raise awareness of the hidden, yet solvable problem of hunger in America. The month of September serves as a platform for organizations, like the Food Bank, to raise awareness about hunger and the work we do throughout the community we serve. Get involved this Hunger Action Month.

Through all of our outreach, advocacy and education, the Food Bank will continue to build a strong coalition of educated partners and advocates who can respond to issues affecting our neighbors in need.