



Cultivating
Healthier
Communities



This year the REFB expanded its provision of help, with a focus on assistance to people who were positioned between the need for emergency food and self-sufficiency. Two programs in development were the Value Market and Food Connections.

The non-profit Value Market remains on the forefront of hunger relief in the world of food banking. The increased patronage of the store confirmed our belief that low-income people benefit from a place where they can find good prices, great quality, and superior customer service-all in a dignified environment. Our customers express their pleasure with the Value Market and appreciation for the added bonus of receiving program referrals to access additional food when the need arises.

# The most gratifying feedback came when customers said, "Thank you for being here."

During the year we worked with the county in preparation for our Food Connections Program that will navigate income qualified individuals through the government maze that leads to CalFresh. Our hope is that the CalFresh benefits will be sufficient for families to avoid having to come for emergency food provided by the REFB.

In 2015 we look forward to improving our provision of help. We will endeavor to improve the quality and quantity of food, enhance our service to our customers (clients and partners), and to better engage our donors and volunteers, who encourage us every day to *end hunger in our community.* 







Tom M. L

David Guhin Board President

# DISTRIBUTING FOOD FOR 12,109,148 MEALS





82,000

>>>>

44% Children14% Seniors

**16%** Working Families

People Served Monthly



of all food distributed is fresh produce





SUPPER PROGRAM
303,253
meals provided
to children in need

4,200 VOLUNTEERS = 40 EMPLOYEES
DONATED 80,000 HOURS



# Sources of Food:

74% Donated



19% Government



Government

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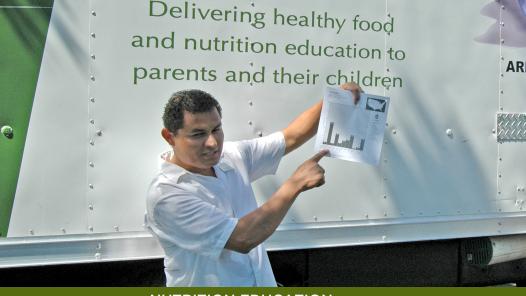
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**NUTRITION EDUCATION** 

Inding hunger in our community isn't only about providing food to those who face hunger. It's about improving the health of our community through access to

nutritious foods and education. A strong community is only possible when our neighbors have enough healthy food to eat and the knowledge to make healthy decisions.

It can take 3 to 15 exposures to get a child to try a new fruit or veggie.

Last year we distributed over 14.5 million pounds of food, half of which was fresh produce. It's no secret that nutritious food is expensive, making it harder to access for the low-income people we serve. Distributing items like protein, produce and dairy helps break down barriers to good health for many in our community.

The road to good health can't be achieved with access to food alone, which is why the REFB offers a variety of nutrition education components through several of our programs. One example is the

Megan Furth Harvest Pantry, where coordinator Alfonso Alarcon (pictured above), conducts weekly nutrition lessons. These lessons are filled with interactive curriculum to

engage participants and teach them the important role a proper diet plays in reducing the risk of childhood anemia. Additionally, Alfonso encourages physical activity for the children and parents by tracking their progress through an activity goal card and even conducting ZUMBA lessons at

the distributions.

Food and nutrition education go hand-in-hand and to better serve the

community we will continue to offer both. We look forward to enhancing the provision of healthy food and nutrition education in the years to come.





Healthy food

access is crucial

to ending hunger

in our community.

The REFB's ability to achieve our mission is dependent on our fleet of delivery trucks. These workhorse vehicles make it possible to acquire

loads of food from all over Northern California and distribute this essential source of nutrients to our neighbors in every corner

of Sonoma County.

Last year we faced a dilemma - our current fleet was at capacity and we couldn't deliver additional food to those in need. The generous

guests at our annual Empty Bowls event stepped in to help. During the Fund-A-Need portion of the auction they raised their paddles and pledged to help buy us a new tractor and trailer combo – a vehicle that is already being put to good use.

This truck makes it possible to distribute the food equivalent of 25,000 meals each day. And, because the trailer is refrigerated,

we are able to deliver perishable foods such as yogurt, milk, cheeses and meats across Sonoma County.

Delivering food to 82,000 of our neighbors each month requires a fleet we can count on. David Goodman, Executive Director, shares

> that "this truck has made it possible to more efficiently distribute greater quantities of fresh food to thousands of people in our region facing the severe

risks associated with hunger."

Our ability to get food to those who need it most is at the core of our mission to end hunger in our community. This truck makes it possible to better serve our community for years to come.

**DELIVERS** 

31,000

FOOD



**EVERY CHILD, EVERY DAY** 

Nutritious food is

academic success

essential to the

of a child.

ultivating healthier communities starts with our children. The REFB's Every Child, Every Day initiative has seven unique programs, all designed to help

ensure children have enough of the nutritious food they need to thrive. In addition to offering supplemental food or prepared meals, many of these programs

also offer nutrition education, fun activities to get kids moving and food tastings to introduce new and healthy options to their developing palates.

We know that low-income children often don't have access to enough of the nutritious food their developing brains and bodies need. This lack of nutrition can lead to anemia, weight related diseases, nutrient deficiencies and a decreased ability to problem solve and focus while in school. Last

year, you helped the REFB serve more than 36,000 children each month - providing healthy and nutritious foods so they could avoid these detrimental side effects

of hunger.

These programs work to create a foundation for success. When children have enough to eat they have better memory recall, verbal

fluency and creativity. During the school year, the Supper Program served 303,253 meals to students. bridging the gap between their school lunch and their next meal. When school lets out for summer recess, the **Summer Lunch Program** fills the gap by serving more than 2,000 meals each day.

Your support ensures that the building blocks to a healthy life are in place and that the children in our community have the nutritious foods they need to succeed.

**HELPS** 

36,200 MONTH



# **DIABETES WELLNESS PROGRAM (DWP)**

HgbA1c reductions

of 1% equal a 40%

reduced risk of

heart disease.

Since 2011 we've been working diligently to understand the connection between food insecurity and chronic health issues, like diabetes. We've partnered with

UCSF to conduct a 3 year study, collecting data at our DWP sites, interviewing and tracking hundreds of participants who are low-income and have, or are at risk of having, diabetes.

While the full findings won't be published until this summer, we do have some preliminary findings that show the important role this program is playing in our community.

During the study period we found that the majority of participants experienced at least a 1% reduction in their HgbA1c levels (blood sugar levels over 2-3 months) when they participated in the DWP. This equates to a 40% reduction in the risk of diabetes related complications – such as heart

disease, blindness, nerve damage and kidney disease.

We've screened thousands of people since 2011 and have found that a real

barrier to a healthy life is rooted in poverty. The study results reveal that 44% of participants are very food insecure and 40% are mildly food insecure. These

profound findings show a direct correlation between poverty and poor health management.

Thanks to you, we will continue the work that successfully connects participants with nutritious food, information and support. As this program continues to grow, we look forward to increasing our impact for this vulnerable population, empowering them to take control of their health.

**DISTRIBUTED** 

4,957 IN 2014



# YOUR GENEROSITY MAKES ENDING HUNGER POSSIBLE

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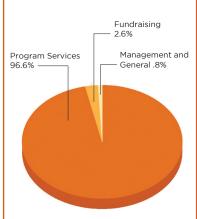
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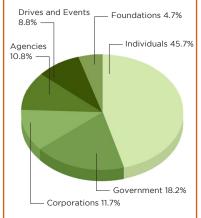
Nicholas and Teresa Randall

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## **REFB EXPENSES**



# SOURCES OF **OPERATING INCOME**



The complete audited financial statements are available upon request or can be found on our website at refb.org/financials.

The Redwood Empire Food Bank provides food in Sonoma County and for hunger relief organizations in Lake, Mendocino, Humboldt and Del Norte counties. The REFB is a member of Feeding America and the California Association of Food Banks.

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