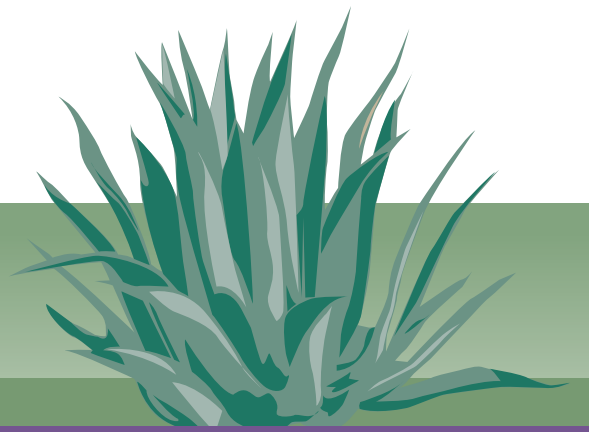


Mesa Uplands Up Close



Bringing neighbors closer to their community

August 2011

UNITED FOOD BANK FILLS FOOD REQUESTS AND WELCOMES DONATIONS

By AnnElise Makin

Lisa Goin has been chief development officer for Mesa's United Food Bank for several months now, but she had no idea how great the need was when she took the job.

Everyday, she drives from Scottsdale to downtown Mesa, clocks in at 6:30 a.m., and helps with her dedicated team put food on the tables of thousands of people.

"At the United Food Bank, we distribute enough food for 40,000 persons per day," Lisa said. In a year, these quantities would fill up 475 semi-trucks, stretching over a 10-mile distance when lined up in a row. There are only four food banks in Arizona, with St. Mary's being the only other one in the Valley.

"But we have many more requests than we can fill," admitted the Food Bank representative. "We are only able to supply about 75 percent of what people ask us for." Since the economy went bust, people who had earlier donated have now become recipients.

Lisa has worked for non-profit organizations all her life, including the Make-A-Wish Foundation and the

Humane Society. But for her, nothing compares to food. "Food is the most basic need," she reflected. "This work can be very humbling."

In the warehouse, the bins are stacked high. Lisa gives many tours to prospective supporters and the media. She points to a set of cardboard bins above her head. "All that is from the Stamp Out Hunger food drive that U.S. Post Office employees put on this year."

Lisa and her staff are most happy when they get nutritionally valuable shakes, juice boxes, peanut butter and

fresh fruit in for the children's needs. The Food Bank makes many deliveries to schools. "Strawberries are an extra bonus," Lisa said. "Eggs are hard to come by, just like milk, produce and meat." Although, Lisa admits, even empty calories from candy and such are better than none at all.

On this day, a producer sent several palettes of cucumbers. These have to be swiftly distributed. Sheriff Joe's low-risk inmates help stack boxes and fill shipments. Thus,

as the two representatives from the Wings of Life Worship Center in Apache Junction. The woman was happy about the non-perishables, but would have liked some bread, as well.

"That's typical," Lisa said. "We can fill about 75 percent of the requests." But sometimes, when there is no bread, there might be pastries. Just ask. On this day, Lisa had a large bin full of them. ■

The United Food Bank is located at 245 S. Nina Drive in Mesa. If you would like to donate, or you have needs or questions, call the office at (480) 926-4897.

To find out more, go to www.unitedfoodbank.org.



Eagle Scout Ryan Rupa raised a total of 233 water bottles with the help of family and friends to donate to the United Food Bank.



hundreds of versatile banana boxes donated by charity partners become a valuable accessory.

The Food Bank inventory is in continuous flux, just like at any grocery store. The warehouse has industrial-size freezers and coolers for adequate storage. According to Lisa, the food gets out very quickly, with 17 inventory turns per year, and 1.5 million pounds distributed per month, which makes 18 million pounds a year.

"All our locations work together in sharing resources and getting the food out," Lisa explained. When producers donate 15,000 pounds of strawberries or 50,000 pounds of watermelons in Yuma, the fruits are quickly dispersed to the other centers.

"In our region, we are likely to get great quantities of citrus," Lisa said. "So, we share that, too." In Mesa, 230 agencies, such as churches, preschools and senior citizen

facilities are benefiting from the food bank service. A total of eight big trucks facilitate the donations pick-up from stores and distribution to the agencies.

Some agencies stop by the Food Bank warehouse directly, such



HOW ANYONE CAN FOOD-BANK

SCHOOL FOOD DRIVES ARE A WIN-WIN

More than one hundred schools participated in the United Food Bank's food drive this year. Among them were many from the Mesa Public Schools district. In total, the schools collected 162,000 pounds of food. Overall winner was Noah Webster Basic School. These busy bees hauled in 57,000 pounds of nutrition all by themselves. Congratulations!



DONATE YOUR GENTLY USED BACKPACKS

If you have already bought a new backpack for the coming school year, donate the old one (in good shape) to the United Food Bank. Backpacks are needed for low-income families so the children can carry food home for the weekends.

If you would like to donate a backpack, call (602) 926-4897

DISCOUNTED GROCERIES ON FRIDAYS, 8 A.M. TO 2 P.M.

The neighborhood *Help Yourself!* program provides qualitative household resources for anyone. Each week, families or individuals can purchase pre-assembled food bags, a total value of \$40, for a low \$16, which include meats, bread and dry goods, as well as fresh produce and fruit.

If you are interested in this discount food service, go to the United Food Bank, located at 358 E. Javelina Ave., on Fridays, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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