HOLIDAY BASKET PROGRAM CONNECTS COMMUNITY

By Arielle Golden, Programs Manager

The Community Resource Center (CRC) is a small but mighty Feeding San Diego partner. The center is tucked away between downtown Encinitas and the Pacific Ocean, providing diverse resources for the North County community including domestic violence services, emergency and transitional housing assistance, a food pantry, and classes. Every holiday season, the CRC takes over a large building in the Del Mar Fairgrounds to provide a free holiday shopping experience called the Holiday Baskets Program to 1,000 North County families facing food insecurity.

Since 1983, CRC has operated this program, which at its inception provided a basket of food to families and now provides much more. Each family “shops” for food, clothing, necessities and gifts, receiving a value of $300 or more of items in their basket. The resources CRC provides through their annual holiday program include more than 120,000 pounds of food.

The longevity of the program has enabled CRC to connect with recipients of the Holiday Baskets program from years ago.

Gabriela “Gaby” Baes received a Holiday Basket when she was eight years old. Twenty years later, she works as an educator with the San Diego County Office of Education’s Migrant Education Program and brings her students in to volunteer for this annual program. While volunteering, she encountered Linda Hayes, another volunteer. They began talking and Gabriela discovered that Linda had personally delivered a Holiday Basket to her family 20 years prior.
Dear Friends,

My name is Denise and I am the Director of Finance for Feeding San Diego. I oversee accounting, human resources, information technology and administration to support all FSD departments and ensure they have the resources necessary to perform their roles efficiently. This allows our staff to focus on creating and maintaining partnerships in the community with other nonprofit organizations, foundations, donors and provide food to those who need it. To the San Diego community, we strive to provide financial information that is transparent for donors, partners and volunteers.

Working for Feeding San Diego has been very rewarding. I know what I do is important as it directly impacts our community. I have seen firsthand what hunger can do to a child, and although I have been very fortunate to have grown up without ever having faced it myself, it is my passion to be part of the fight to end hunger. Ultimately, my goal is to give hope to the families we serve and inspire them to make positive changes in our community and the world we live in.

Thank you,

Denise Gurule
NEWCOMER GROWS ROOTS AS VOLUNTEER

By Madeleine Hennessy, Marketing & Communications Manager

Feeding San Diego integrates nutrition education into all initiatives and programs. Working to reduce the risk of chronic illnesses associated with hunger, FSD focuses on distributing healthy and fresh foods along with appropriate nutrition education but it wouldn’t be possible without volunteers like Mardi.

Mardi moved to San Diego two years ago when her husband got a new job in town on short notice. She left her post as an Assistant Professor of Nutrition & Dietetics at the University of Akron and settled into America’s Finest City.

With her doctorate in nutritional biology and a Master in Human Nutrition, Mardi began looking for employment. Currently teaching part-time at Southwestern College, Mardi noticed all the research on hunger and nutrition that Feeding America publishes and it caught her eye.

Soon after, she saw a posting on LinkedIn for a Nutrition Volunteer position at Feeding San Diego and she jumped at the opportunity. She officially began in July of 2016.

It was a new experience for her, as she was used to being in a classroom or lab setting.

“I’m actually a pretty quiet person and the idea of interacting with all these different people made me nervous,” said Mardi.

But as she became more comfortable, she could see the impact she was making on clients’ health.

As clients received food at distributions, Mardi was there to answer any nutrition questions or tell them about the topic of her lesson that day – whether it was regarding protein, sodium, fiber or sugar.

She now feels like she knows the clients well and is able to give them helpful suggestions on nutritious diets, recipes or healthy food options.

This position has not only allowed her to share her wealth of information but has also helped her establish roots.

“Everybody I’ve met in San Diego is really nice and friendly, and volunteering is a way to be a part of our community. That’s what I like about it,” said Mardi. “I’m new to San Diego and for the first time in my adult life, I’m actually committing to a community.”
This holiday season is a time to be with family and friends, share stories and express gratitude.

1 in 8 San Diegans struggle with hunger. Be a source of hope and joy for the 63,000 children, families and seniors we serve each week.

Help us reach our holiday goal: one million meals to those in need this season, and all year long. Through Feeding San Diego, every $1 you give provides four meals.

FEEDINGSANDIEGO.ORG/MMM
VETERAN MAKES ENDS MEET WITH CALFRESH

By Madeleine Hennessy, Marketing & Communications Manager

In a cozy coffeeshop in Vista, Khuzema meets with Rachel, AmeriCorps VISTA CalFresh Capacity Coordinator at Feeding San Diego. They greet one another, exchanging hugs and chatting. They’re good friends. Afterall, Rachel is the reason Khuzema is breathing easier this holiday season.

Khuzema is a veteran, living in Vista with his 7-year old son. He recently completed his MBA and wants to eventually get his PhD. In 1996, Khuzema immigrated to the U.S. from India, joined the United States Navy and served for eleven years, completing combat tours in Iraq and Fallujah as a Corpsman. After he left the military, it’s been difficult for Khuzema to find employment but he had to find a way to make ends meet for his son.

“He is the reason I can make life livable,” said Khuzema.

Khuzema turned to local food distributions to stretch his budget. He also applied for the CalFresh Program but it seemed to be more of a headache than a benefit so he gave up.

The CalFresh Program assists low-income families to purchase nutritional food, and Feeding San Diego helps enroll clients, dispel myths and help eliminate the stigma around the program. FSD’s model is designed to move clients toward self-sufficiency and provide support throughout the complicated application process.

Khuzema admits he would have never applied for CalFresh again had it not been for Rachel.

“This person is genuinely trying to help me and it worked,” Khuzema said excitedly. “I didn’t know I could do a telephone interview instead of wasting a whole day at the office. The telephone interview made it easier and accessible.”

Before receiving CalFresh, Khuzema would always make sure his son had meals but that meant sometimes only bread and water himself. Now, he can get his son’s favorite foods - eggs and homemade pizza.

“I get crust from the store and use vegetables to make veggie pizza,” explains Khuzema. “You can buy a large 14” pizza, but it’s cheaper to make at home and it’s still good.”

And he’s seen a change in his health, both physically and mentally.

“Since receiving the benefits, I have less stress and less fatigue. When you have half that much nutrition, you have half as much energy.”

Khuzema acknowledges that Rachel’s help and guidance made all the difference.

“CalFresh definitely amounted to me being better and if I’m better, I can take care of my son better. ”
The holiday season is approaching, and we’re preparing for this special time to give hope to the one in eight San Diegans who struggle with hunger. Join us this year to help provide more than one million meals for children, families and seniors in need. Here are a couple ways to get involved.

**VOLUNTEER**

Holiday shifts fill up quickly. Sign up now with your family or corporate group to get the date you want.

Contact our volunteer department at volunteersd@feedingsandiego.org or 858.452.3663.

**DONATE**

In a time of year when food is so prominent, help us provide meals for families this holiday. Consider making your tax deductible year-end gift to help with holiday distributions or give a gift in honor of a loved one. Every $1 donated provides four meals.

FEEDINGSAN DIEGO.ORG/DONATE

HOLIDAY VOLUNTEER OPEN HOUSE  
DECEMBER 3, 9 AM - 12 PM

Every holiday season, Feeding San Diego relies on the support of volunteers to sort product and distribute it to our distribution partners and clients.

Join us for our Holiday Volunteer Open House to learn more about volunteering, tour the facility and try several of our regular volunteer projects.

We invite you to bring friends and family for a fun morning giving hope and sharing joy with the nearly half a million San Diegans struggling with hunger.

FEEDINGSAN DIEGO.ORG/GET-INVOLVED
As the program has expanded, it has not always been easy to manage. Distributing forty pound boxes of food to more than 1,000 families, plus warm outerwear, toys and other holiday necessities is no easy feat. The program has a dedicated group of long-term volunteers and community supporters who are crucial to picking up donations, packing boxes, setting up the event and distributing food. The holiday season is always a busy time for partners working with families facing hunger, and FSD appreciates the hard work of our partners to serve the San Diego community.

ON THE GO

greetings from Wheelz and the NUcrew

Hello Friends,

We love stopping by USO Kids & Family Night at the USO San Diego Downtown Center! This event is a weekly dinner for service members and military families to enjoy a free meal and access useful resources.

Feeding San Diego interns hosted a station with fun nutrition activities about MyPlate and challenged participants to place food in the corresponding category.

We had about 30 families stop by the station to discuss nutrition, CalFresh and play together as a family. Such a fun way to learn about food and healthy options for everyone!

Wheelz and the NUcrew

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ON THE GO
Join Feeding San Diego and the 13,000 individuals who dedicate their time to help feed more than 490,000 children, families and seniors every year.

Feeding more than 63,000 children, families and seniors every week, FSD relies on the support of individuals, corporations and community groups. Through our highly organized distribution model, every $1 donated turns into four meals.

In order to achieve a hunger-free and healthy community, FSD advocates on behalf of the food insecure on a federal, state and local level. Lend your voice to the fight against hunger and show your support for hunger-relief efforts on social media.