

2012 ANNUAL REPORT



OUR MISSION: To build community support for meeting the needs of the hungry through education and resource development; to increase the production and distribution of locally grown food; and to be a voice for the hungry.

Annual Address from Harvey Grady, Chair

In 2008, I was shocked to find that 1 in 5 Americans face hunger due to economic decline. Arizona had the second highest poverty rate in the nation in 2010. Our middle class families are sliding into poverty due to business bankruptcy, job losses, reduced wages, and home foreclosures. And now 39% of Arizona families have incomes edging into poverty. The “working poor” in our county now have to rely on food banks to get by.



What’s more, in our rural county we have 1 in 3 children who are hungry or food-insecure. Their parents cannot make enough to keep food on the table.

Thanks to generous community support, the Verde Food Council has worked with partner organizations to increase food resources for our hungry neighbors. We have helped food banks and pantries expand their services. We’ve assisted schools in teaching gardening to students, and communities in teaching gardening to families. Faith-based groups have started school weekend meals (Backpacks for Kids) programs. And we have *more than doubled* the amount of emergency food delivered to the Verde Valley by St. Mary’s Food Bank Alliance.

These successful programs demonstrate the support that you and others provide to feed our hungry neighbors through the efforts of the Verde Food Council.

And now, due to requests from the Prescott region, we are expanding our service throughout Yavapai County. The Verde Food Council is becoming the *Yavapai Food Council!* With your help as a donor or volunteer, we will supply even more emergency food and develop a countywide food plan for sustainable agriculture that allows everyone to eat healthy, locally grown food. Together, we can do it!

Harvey Grady

BOARD of DIRECTORS:

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Gardens for Humanity

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Heather Klomprens

Yavapai County Community Health Services

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Amy Aossey

HEALTHY FOOD FOR HUNGRY KIDS

Emergency Food for Children

VFC has used a local partners model for expanding the Backpacks for Kids weekend meals program to six school districts and 29 schools. Our part-time VFC executive director receives requests from schools for weekend meals, then motivates up to three local faith groups, civic clubs or businesses to provide funds and volunteers to start and maintain the program throughout the 36-week school year.

Backpacks for Kids weekend meals programs now serve 187 students at 8 schools.

Schools participating in Backpacks for Kids weekend meals include:

Beaver Creek School * Big Park School * Cottonwood Elementary * Cottonwood Middle * Dr. Daniel Bright School * Mingus High School * Oak Creek School * West Sedona School.



Sodexo and Central Arizona Food Bank sponsor programs in four Cottonwood-Oak Creek School District schools, and VFC sponsors four schools in other districts.

Six district schools, 12 charter schools, and two private schools are not yet served by the Backpacks program. VFC assists schools with the highest free/reduced meals percentages in areas where food banks are willing to participate.

In addition, 933 children attend day care with 29 child care providers in the Verde region that *do not* offer weekday or weekend meals.

Development of School Gardens

VFC works with Gardens for Humanity and Master Gardeners in starting and maintaining 10 school gardens with a hands-on curriculum that incorporates state academic standards.



School gardens include:

Beaver Creek School * Big Park School * Camp Verde Elementary * Camp Verde High * Desert Star Charter School * Mingus High School * Red Rock High School * Sedona Charter School * West Sedona School * Verde Valley School.

Nineteen other schools *do not* have school gardens, and VFC will assist them as funds and volunteers become available. VFC and Gardens for Humanity seek grants and local contributions to expand this vital educational program to additional schools.

DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Development of Community Gardens

VFC collaborates with Gardens for Humanity and other community groups to start and maintain community gardens of various designs that provide a meeting place for neighbors to build better relationships and learning centers for gardening, food preservation, and healthy cooking skills.

These 12 community gardens are now functioning for various community groups.

Beaver Creek Community Garden * Cornville Mission Food Bank Garden * Cornucopia Community Garden * Cottonwood Community Garden * El Portal Community Garden * Friends of the Well at Montezuma's Well * Oak Creek Canyon Indian Gardens * Sedona Community Center * St. Andrew's Episcopal Church Garden * St. John Vianney Catholic Church Garden * Unity of Sedona Community Garden * Verde Valley Senior Center Greenhouse.

These gardens require a long-term commitment by community groups to furnish start-up costs, as well as year-round maintenance. Persons raised in cities find that this hands-on experience engages them in learning how to work in harmony with the earth, an advantage that their ancestors may have taken for granted. Master gardeners provide classes in all phases of the gardening skill set, while encouraging neighbors to "grow" relationships with neighbors.



Linking Local Growers with Emergency Food Providers

Because the food provided by food banks may not be the most nutritious or freshest available, VFC made progress in linking local growers with the Beaver Creek Food Bank and the Cornville Mission Food Bank. VFC provided \$3,000 in grant funds to each food bank so they could, for the first time, buy fresh and healthy produce from local growers. This model "Healthy Food for the Hungry" project linked two food banks with four local growers and produced unexpected donations of food from growers to the food banks. Our "Healthy Food Fund" receives donations from individuals and businesses to continue and expand this important program.

Support for Emergency Food Providers

VFC supports emergency food providers by distributing funds from donations and grants, addressing current needs, and introducing innovations. In 2012 VFC distributed \$12,262 to 10 emergency food providers.

VFC partners with the following emergency food providers throughout the Valley:

Adventist Food Bank * Beaver Creek School, Food Bank, and Adult Center * Bread of Life Mission * Central Arizona Food Bank * Camp Verde Senior Center * Cornville Mission Food Bank * Hearts for the Hungry & Homeless * Mountain View Methodist Church Food Pantry * New Hope Community Food Pantry * Old Town Mission * Rising Hope Food Pantry * Sedona Community Food Bank * Sedona Community Center * St. Andrews Episcopal Church * St. Vincent de Paul - Camp Verde * St. Vincent de Paul - Cottonwood * St. Vincent de Paul - Sedona * Verde Valley Senior Centers * Verde Valley Care Givers * Yavapai-Apache Food Bank.

IMPROVEMENT & INNOVATION

Program Development

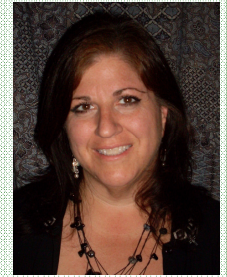
VFC addresses challenges in promoting community awareness of hunger, increasing the quality and quantity of food for the hungry, and developing plans for achieving food security for our total population through sustainable agriculture. Our partnerships bring together people and organizations with motivation and expertise to build our food security.

New VFC Programs include:

- Partnership with St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance** - By working with St Mary's, VFC has more than *doubled* the delivery of emergency food to local providers between 2009 and 2012.
- Healthy Affordable Food for the Hungry** - VFC provides emergency food providers with the option of purchasing food weekly at wholesale pricing or lower through relationships established with commercial food service distributors. With these savings and reduction of purchasing time, our providers can feed more persons.
- Hunger Helpline** - VFC acquired a part-time AmeriCorps member to establish a telephone helpline that food-insecure persons and families can call to locate available emergency food providers. We will need *volunteers* to establish helpline hours. We make follow-up calls to see if the callers actually received the emergency food they needed and if food services need improvement.
- Plan for Verde Valley Food Security** - VFC seeks funding to convene a panel of key agricultural organizations to create a conceptual plan that identifies that amounts and types of healthy food that can be grown locally to provide food security for our residents.

2012 Executive Director Reflections

In May of 2012, I was entrusted the responsibility of executing the mission of VFC. Without a doubt, I can say that this last year has been one of the most rewarding, challenging and meaningful times in my life. The shocking reality of hunger in our community; the fact that every food bank purchases food from grocery stores to meet the needs of our hungry; and the general lack of awareness toward the hunger epidemic all fuel my passion for better systems, education and expansion. We've come a long way, yet there is so much more to be done. I look to the future with optimism and perseverance!



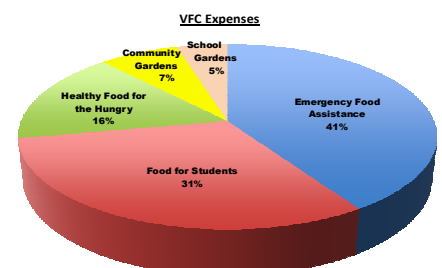
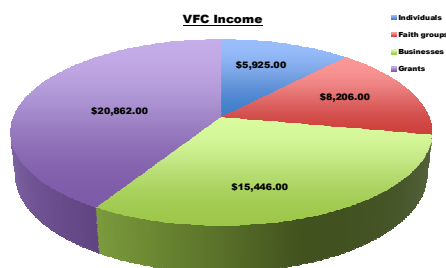
- Amy Aossey

Financial Report

Income: \$50,438.82

Expenses: \$57,173.46

2013 Carry-forward balance:
\$29,724.31



Funding Sources

We thank these organizations for supporting VFC: Arizona Community Foundation, Sedona Community Foundation, Yavapai County Community Foundation, United Way of Yavapai County, New Earth Foundation, SL Gimbel Foundation, AZ Partnership for Ending Child Hunger, Association of Arizona Food Banks, New Frontiers Natural Marketplace, Hensley Beverage Company, Nice Jons, Medi Store, Church of the Red Rocks, Jewish Community of Sedona/Verde Valley, Christ Lutheran Church, United Methodist Church of Sedona, Unity of Sedona, Sedona Film Festival, Cornucopia Community Advocates, Gardens for Humanity, and other businesses and individuals.