



# FOOD4THOUGHT

DECEMBER 2015



FIGHTING HUNGER  
**FEEDING HOPE**

## ACCEPTING ASSISTANCE, WHEN MOST NEEDED

Emma gets food from a Valley Food Bank pantry. She's had to apply off and on over the past 12 years in order to make sure her family was fed. She does it for her kids. "My children have to eat every day, and they have to eat enough of the right food for their bodies and brains to develop. So I signed up for the assistance at one of the pantries for the first time when my older child was about 2 years old.

"My hand shook the first time I filled out the sign-in sheet and my voice probably squeaked during the brief orientation. But when I was told this was a self-certifying pantry and that I was welcome, I felt nothing but relief. We kept coming for assistance for about six months, and then things got a little better."

"I don't do it all the time," said Emma. She understands living within her means and strives not to receive assistance for more than about 6 months at a time as a personal goal. "I use it when I need it, when the situation

is such that I cannot pay my bills and buy groceries at the same time. When I am underemployed; when my expenses rise; or when an emergency repair or doctor visit cuts into my income."

Life seemed to be looking up for Emma, then suddenly she had two kids, a divorce, a low paying job, and all of the expenses of a household on her head. She went back for help and encouragement after 3 years. Emma is thankful that, "at least the children would have food."

"I am not poor because I am lazy, stupid, or uneducated." This is often the assumption that cuts deeply. "Why don't you get a better job?" "Why don't you get a second job?" "Educate yourself for a better career!" Everything Emma described is realities that she deals with. To this point, Emma says, "I am not ashamed of any of it; it is just what is. Thank you for being a resource when we are struggling."



*Hundreds of volunteers check and sort the food donations, people like Emma wouldn't have the variety of food they now enjoy without them.*



*Many would be without food if the food pantries were not available to them. Thank you for your generous donations.*

## DIRECTOR'S CORNER – WHO WE ARE



Imagine not knowing where you will find your next meal. Unfortunately, many of our neighbors do not need to imagine. As many as 1 in 5 Angelenos worry where their next meal will come from. These are people you meet every day- those with low wage jobs, children, seniors on fixed incomes, and those with health issues.

Nearly half of the food we distribute feeds children.

The Valley Food Bank is the largest private hunger-relief organization of its kind in the valley. Today, the Valley Food Bank has extended its reach into surrounding communities, providing food and supplies to more than 3,600 families each month. Here are two stories of who we help and who we are:

**The Long Road...** Liz and her husband drove to Los Angeles from their home in an adjacent state, seeking work. Arriving in Los Angeles, they were faced by the reality that work was not readily available. They found that the cost of living, particularly housing and food, was beyond

their means. Any hope of finding suitable accommodations was further depleted by their car breaking down. In fact, the car became the home for the couple and their two children until they visited an organization supported by the Valley Food Bank.

Liz was distressed, in tears, and very moved by the assistance provided in the form of food and diapers. This assistance enabled the family to direct finances toward repairing their car and returning to Arizona and family support.

**Turning things around...** Jason and Christine went to the Food Pantry approximately 12 months ago in desperation as Jason had been laid off from his work, they had lost one of their five children to SIDS, and they had been evicted from their home.

They were living on the beach using a trailer for the kids to sleep in and a truck tarp to live under. At the Food Pantry, they received food and assistance, which enabled them to get back on their feet – they were just normal people going through a difficult time. Christine now volunteers in the Food Pantry. Jason has found work, and they have a house for their family to live in.

## NOTHING SAYS CHRISTMAS LIKE...GIVING

Every donation you give makes a huge difference in people's lives.

Rosemary is a diabetic and depends on fresh fruits and vegetables. The food she receives from the Valley Food Bank allows her to use her money to pay rent and bills and not worry if there will be money left to buy groceries. Rosemary says she feels blessed and grateful for the fresh produce and other healthy foods she receives from the Valley Food Bank.

Jamie hurt his hand on the job and was unable to work for a while. If he didn't work, he didn't get paid, which meant he couldn't buy groceries. Jamie found one of our food pantries and was surprised at the amount of produce and food he was able to receive. He says his parents taught him to pay it forward and that is just what he's doing. Jamie now volunteers at the Valley Food Bank, which he says is a blessing to him and the community.

