



FOOD4THOUGHT

NOVEMBER 2015



FIGHTING HUNGER
FEEDING HOPE

REMEMBERING THANKSGIVING

The economy may be showing signs of life, but food pantries and other nonprofit food-distribution agencies are struggling to meet record-breaking demand as the holidays approach. With our sister ministry recently opened in Northridge, we have planned 80 turkeys for their Great Thanksgiving Banquet for 1,500 in the community. Partnering with the Men at Brewline and a local church's youth group, we will be providing thousands of dry goods and other nonperishable food to assemble 300 "Boxes of Hope" for distribution on Thanksgiving Day at the local Home Depot to help the Day Laborers and their families. Pantries will be gearing up to give out record amounts of food for the holidays. Our distribution sites throughout the valley have become commonplace, as shown by the 3,600 families that received aid this past month.

Many individuals are still unemployed or underemployed and their despair is clear.

Seniors, like Thelma, used to make a big Thanksgiving spread for their children and grandchildren every year, with turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, and steaming bowls of fresh vegetables and fresh baked dinner rolls followed by homemade baked desserts. That was before - before she lost her job, before she went on unemployment and then to a minimum-wage job, before she had to give up her place to move in with her 37-year-old daughter. Now, she said, she doesn't have anywhere of her own. But this Thanksgiving she is determined to cook as usual, even though she's broke and has to squeeze into her daughter's tiny kitchen to do it. For Thelma, it all comes down to a donated turkey. She might not have all the traditional trimmings, but she will have the main course because so many responded this year with turkeys. "They gave me a turkey, so I am going to cook up this bird!" she said fiercely as she loaded the turkey and bags of groceries into her battered sedan outside the pantry.

One formerly middle-class woman who was waiting in line wept at the "humbling" experience of standing in a food line for the first time. She was too embarrassed to give her name, but she said her townhouse is set to be auctioned in December and she did not know where her family would go, or how soon after the sale, they would be out on the street. "I hope I'll be able to get through Christmas," she said.

Although the unemployment rate in the area is lower than the national average, federal agencies say hunger and poverty are on the rise. Our team is working overtime to help as many families as we can - that is only possible with all the generous support from our partners and heroes. Thank you!



THANKS FOR GIVING

As Thanksgiving approaches, we want to tell you how thankful we are for you. Your gifts, encouragement, prayers, and time spent supporting our work does so much more than provide food for the needy. You made a difference to 45,658 families this past 12 months. That represents 184,084 individuals whose lives benefited from



your generosity. This past year we had 5,494 volunteers providing 40,713 hours of service. It would be impossible to name all the faithful heroes that support the work we do. But, we would like to highlight one couple that stood out this year.

Hal and Sophia have been heroes to the Valley Food Bank for a decade. This year Hal helped with some advice, encouragement, financial support, and strategies to help us grow the food bank and prioritize our communications through social media and updating our web page. Both Hal and Sophia are always available with insightful, forward thinking ideas and willing to be part of the solution to aid us in helping more struggling individuals. We give thanks for such a talented and generous couple; many families will be blessed because of their partnership.

Hal and Sophia were selected as this year's recipients of the Penny Wayne Humanitarian Award, An honor presented for commitment to serving others. This will be the second such award in the Food Bank's 14-year history. Congratulations Hal and Sophia on your recognition and for your unconditional love and generosity to others. Thanks for giving!

WE HAD TO DO SOMETHING

With one child in tow and three more in school, Julio and Candelaria made their journey from Inglewood to the Valley Food Bank desperately seeking help. As Julio explained, lately work has been "hard to find or sporadic for both of us." Julio continued, "Today, neither of us worked and the cost of food is so high that we felt we had to find a way to bring home some food." They had seen our information on a local Spanish language TV station and hoped this would be a place to get help. Though distribution of food takes place every day of the week (except Sunday), through our food pantries throughout the Valley and not at the warehouse, our staff was compelled to take action. We were able to assemble an emergency food box with nutritious staples such as beans, rice, and pasta, as well as cereal and other breakfast items for their little ones and a pantry list in case they need more support in the future. At the end of their visit, it was a privilege to pray with them and encourage them. Thank you for your support of the Valley Food Bank, without your help, we would not be able to help hurting families like this one.

