



Hunger Matters

A Newsletter from The Casa Hunger Action Ministry

An Outreach Ministry of the Franciscan Renewal Center

Bread of life, bread of Heaven, give us this day, our daily bread, feed those, who are hungry. Amen. *Bread for the World*

We hope this newsletter informs and inspires you to become more involved with hunger issues in Arizona, our country and the world. In each newsletter we'll provide you with current information as well as activities, at the Casa and in our community, where individuals or groups can participate to help reduce hunger.

The **Vision** of the **Hunger Action Ministry** is to be a change agent in our community. **Our Mission** is to promote and support local organizations that strive to eliminate and reduce hunger. Our Vision and Mission are made achievable through our **Subcommittees: Awareness, Advocacy and Action**. To learn more about our Ministry see page 4.

AWARENESS

The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) has developed a list of eight essential strategies to ending hunger. One of those strategies is to **Make Sure all Families have Convenient Access to Reasonably Priced, Healthy Food**. Much of this newsletter is devoted to this strategy.

What is a Food Desert?

A food desert is an **impoverished area where residents lack access to healthy foods**. They may exist in rural or urban areas and are associated with complex geographic and socioeconomic factors, as well as with poor diet and health disorders such as obesity.

While there's no one standard definition to go by, food deserts are generally considered to be places where residents don't have access to affordable, nutritious foods like fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

Instead of grocery stores or farmers' markets, these areas often have convenience stores and gas stations with limited shelf space available for healthy options—making nutritious foods virtually inaccessible for many families there.

Socioeconomic status might also play a role, as low-income individuals get priced out of high-quality healthy foods. After all, \$50 worth of boxed meals and frozen dinners can often last a family longer than \$50 worth of fresh vegetables and lean meats.

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A PRAYER FOR OUR TIMES

Lord God,

Open our hearts so that we may receive your peace. Peace that allows us to look at others through heaven's eyes and helps guide us towards your vision of a world free of the violence of hunger and poverty.

Give us the strength and clarity of mind to find our purpose and walk the path you've laid not only for us, but also for our communities and our country.

Even when our hearts are heavy, unsure when the bills will be paid, when racism will stop, when the next meal will come, we know you will bring the good news again.

Please guide our hearts and our minds with your peace and powerful love. Thank you for your mighty and sovereign hand. Help us to fully trust in you and rest in the peace that you offer.

In the precious name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

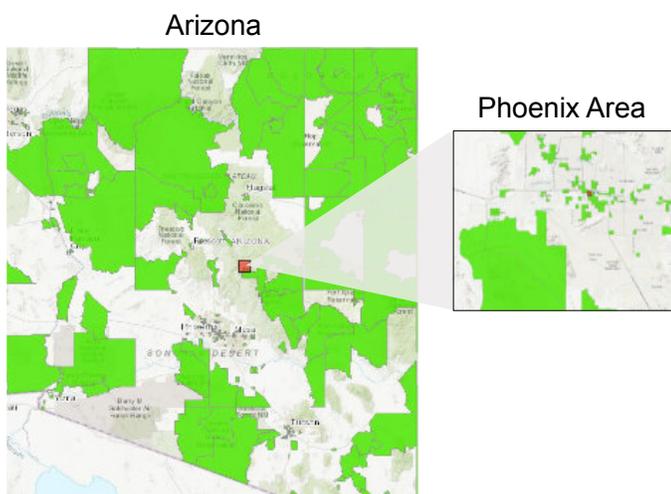


Bread for the World

Relative to other areas, food deserts are also more likely to have

- Higher concentrations of minority residents
- Higher rates of vacant homes
- Higher unemployment rates
- Lower levels of education among residents
- Smaller populations

In an effort to illustrate the extent of the food deserts near us, the Arizona and Phoenix maps below were downloaded from the United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service website. The green areas show populations without vehicles who live from 1 to 10 miles from a grocery store.



A Grocery Store...

...is much more than a store. “A grocery store doesn’t just bring food to a neighborhood; it can create an environment of possibility that spills over into the entire community.”
---Jeff Brown, CEO of Brown’s ShopRite supermarkets.

Sometimes a grocery store does much more in a community than sell food: sometimes it actually changes lives. The store that opened in our community brought about three hundred jobs to the neighborhood. But there is more. Brown did not just hire residents—he hired residents who were having the hardest time finding work, including forty people who were formerly incarcerated. Brown partnered with two area nonprofits to run a job training program targeted to veterans, formerly incarcerated residents and women seeking independence from public assistance.

Brown has done other things to link the store to the community. Before opening the store, his team met with community groups, neighborhood associations and church groups to find out what they wanted the store to carry.

When new markets open in long underserved neighborhoods, they can change the perception that the neighborhood is not a good place to do business. They can also bolster neighborhood housing values and create value for low-income homeowners. A study of the impact of new supermarkets on neighborhood housing values in Philadelphia found that the value of houses located between a quarter-mile and a half-mile from the new store increased by 4 to 7 percent after the store opened. *Excerpt from the book, A Place at the Table, edited by Peter Pringle.*

Further information on food deserts:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food_desert
- <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/09/business/food-deserts-coronavirus-grocery-stores/index.html>
- <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/08/20/trader-joes-kroger-walmart-supervalu-and-americas-food-deserts.html>

Feed your Soul:

The Hunger Action Ministry is pleased to offer, once again, our Lenten class “Food for Thought.” Because of the pandemic this will be a Zoom class and will be offered March 1, 8, 15 and 22 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm

To register online, visit

[https://frc.retreatportal.com/events/f?p=EVENTS:1:::.](https://frc.retreatportal.com/events/f?p=EVENTS:1:::)

Once registered you’ll receive an email confirmation and registration receipt. In a separate email from Lora@thecasa.org you’ll be sent a link to this Zoom event.

ADVOCACY

Another of FRAC’s eight essential strategies to ending hunger is **Build Political Will**. Learn how you can influence our State legislators and the current bills they’re considering.

2021 Arizona Legislative Session--Express Yourself!!

The Arizona Legislature convenes on January 11, 2021. Each year Arizona lawmakers introduce over 1,500 bills!

You can weigh in on bills from your own computer, tablet or smart phone. Through the Request to Speak (RTS) system, you can give bills a thumbs up or thumbs down and add comments that the legislators can see. **The best part is you do not have to speak!** Legislators do check this system to see where people stand on the issues.

You can also read a summary of a bill or the bill in its entirety and get updates as it goes through the legislature. RTS is non-partisan and you do not need to be voting age or a citizen to use it. There are other features in RTS you may find interesting, too.

You must have an account to use RTS, and you can establish one through the group, **Civic Engagement Beyond Voting (CEBV)**.

- Go to [CEBV](#) website and fill out the form to register for an account.
- A volunteer will get you registered on one of the computers at the Capitol and email the information to you. You can then change the password to one of your choice.
- If you would rather set up the account yourself, you can do that at the Capitol on one of their computers.

Now that you have an account, how do you use the system?

- There is a tutorial on the Request to Speak system.
- CEBV is also a good source for learning how to navigate RTS. There is a tutorial on their website.
- Also, CEBV is hosting weekly trainings online. Sign up on their website for one or more that are convenient for you.

With over 1,500 bills every year, the sheer volume of information can be overwhelming. **Where do you find out about bills that interest you?**

You need to know whether a bill is in the House or the Senate. The designation for a bill starts with HB (House bill) or SB (Senate bill) and numbers unique to that bill. For example, HB0001.

- Newspapers will often highlight bills and give their designations.
- Other sources are television news, radio, or social media.
- Melinda Merkel Iyer founding editor, created the **Arizona Legislature Weekly**, a condensed, easy-to-follow weekly overview that highlights notable bills of each session. Often called “the Iyer Report” or “the Weekly,” Melinda’s report describes each bill in brief everyday language and details its status for the week. She recommends a stance for each bill and cites multiple sources of information so readers can make up their own minds. You can sign up for the **AZ Legislature Weekly** on the CEBV website.

Be an informed citizen. Let your legislators know where you stand through RTS. Arizonans are fortunate to have this tool at our fingertips. **Use it freely!**

ACTION

Did you know:

- Food Banks are serving 60% more people during the pandemic.
- SVdP usually benefits from 480 food drives a year. As of September 2020 they had benefitted from only 75.

Many thanks for the generosity of our Casa community who donated to our recent **food drives** to benefit St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP). In September we collected 2,387 pounds of food and in December we collected 3,034 pounds! That’s an additional 647 pounds collected!! SVdP is very appreciative of the efforts of the Casa community.



A very special thanks to the Tonto Verde Women’s Golf Association (WGA) for arriving at the December food drive with an SUV filled with food items.

WATCH FOR UPCOMING FOOD DRIVES

As a reminder, the following are shelf-stable food items most welcomed by Food Banks:

- Canned tuna or chicken
- Peanut butter in plastic jars
- Boxed mac-n-cheese
- Spam
- Canned and/or dried beans
- Rice and/or Pasta
- Canned soup
- Canned fruit (low sugar)
- Canned vegetables (low sodium)
- Breakfast cereal
- Instant potatoes

Monetary donations to SVdP can be made online at www.stvincentdepaul.net/give/donate. Alternatively, a check can be mailed to P.O. Box 13600, Phoenix, AZ 85002.

Other local food banks that would welcome a monetary donation follow:

- St. Mary’s Food Bank: donate online at www.firstfoodbank.org/give. Every \$1 donated provides food for 7 meals. To volunteer visit <https://volunteer.firstfoodbank.org>.

- Desert Mission Food Bank: donate or volunteer online at www.desertmission.com

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR MINISTRY

Each of our subcommittees has specific areas of responsibility. Those responsibilities are outlined below.

Awareness

September Hunger Action Month Event/s
Food for Thought Lenten Series
Association of AZ Foodbanks Conference
Educational Movies and Events

Advocacy

Awareness on significant issues related to local and national hunger

- Bread for the World
- Feeding America
- St. Mary's Foodbank
- Arizona Food Bank Network

Legislative interaction: letters/emails (Offering of Letters), phone calls, face-to-face meetings

Action

Scheduled service activities with local agencies focused on alleviating hunger

- Food donations in Casa lobby bins
- Group volunteering at local food banks
- Front desk food kindness bags

Hunger Action Ministry (HAM)

The Casa/Franciscan Renewal Center

Faith in Action Ministry

web: HAM

Email: hungeraction@thecasa.org

Please notify us if you would like to be removed from our mailing list

We hope you have found this newsletter informative. If you have suggestions for future issues, please email us at hungeraction@thecasa.org

Answers to Quiz: 1. True, 2. False, 3. True, 4. False, 5. True, 6. False, 7. True

MEET OUR HUNGER ACTION MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS

SALLY COFFIN



Sally leads **the Awareness Subcommittee** which provides focus on the different aspects of hunger and what can be done to eliminate hunger. Two of the main activities of the Awareness Subcommittee include the annual Lenten class, "Food for Thought: Lenten course" and the Annual September Hunger Action Awareness Month activities. Both of these activities provide insight into the causes and impacts of hunger and how, as Catholics, we can make a difference.

Sally has always had an interest in food and nutrition which led to her receiving a degree from University of Arizona focused on nutrition, food science and business.

After viewing the movie "A Place at the Table," she felt called to join the Hunger Action Ministry where she could utilize her education and passion. Sally strongly believes that one person can make a difference in the elimination of hunger, leading to a domino effect from a single person.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF FOOD DESERTS



All questions are true or false.

1. Food deserts can be in both urban and rural areas.
2. Grocery stores are plentiful in food deserts.
3. The primary places people shop for groceries in a food desert are gas stations and convenience stores.
4. It's easy to buy fruits and vegetables in a food desert.
5. Junk food is easier to buy in food deserts.
6. It's easy to take a cab or public transportation to get to a grocery store in a food desert.
7. Alternative ways to get healthy food that is reasonably priced needs to be a focus area for food deserts.