



CENTRAL
CALIFORNIA
FOOD BANK



FEED HOPE

SPRING 2023

SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED OUR COUNTRY

Newlyweds Melissa and Mike Martinez, Jr. were living the dream in Italy — he was serving as a Senior Airman in the United States Air Force, and she was working as an afterschool program Counselor at Aviano Air Base. Although living overseas during the height of the pandemic had its challenges, it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity they embraced with open arms. Mike was proud to be serving his country, and they were ecstatic when they found out they were expecting their first child.

However, in the summer of 2022, when Mike completed his Air Force contract, they came home to a very different Madera, CA. Gas prices were nearly \$5 per gallon and food costs had risen over 25%. Unemployed and with a baby on the way, the reality of civilian life hit them like a ton of bricks. Although they had the support of their wonderful families, it was a stark difference from the independent life they had in their own villa in Europe. They knew they had to find a way to help make ends meet.

That's when Mike and Melissa sought services through Central California Food Bank's Groceries2Go program. Our online appointment-based grocery pick-up service was a perfect fit in their time of need.

"Making our appointment was so easy and the food was amazing," exclaims Melissa. "The meat, eggs, and milk really helped us save money, especially when we were both out of work."

Mike and Melissa have since welcomed a healthy baby girl, and he is working as a Safety Officer at a local school and attending Grand Canyon University, majoring in History. They both hope to teach in Madera Unified School District someday.

It is our honor to help serve those who have served our country!

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THE SIDE DISH

Kym Dildine, co-CEO



As a mother of five young children, I worry about a lot of things. Will he get hurt climbing that tree? Did they brush their teeth? Have we read enough? Will she be included? Will he ace the test? Will he make the team? Will she look both ways before crossing the street? Will kids be kind? Will *THEY* be kind? While there are many things to worry about, I have never had to worry about being able to feed my kids. I can only imagine the desperation and heartache that causes. And that is why I am here. That is why you, my friend, are here. **We believe in a community where no one has to go to bed hungry. We know we can ease the worry of others.**

Each month, YOU feed over 300,000 people. Over 100,000 are kids. You probably don't know any of them personally, but through your gifts, you have entered their lives and made a difference. You have provided culturally appropriate pantry staples, fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy and protein. You have made food accessible in their neighborhood or at their school. **You have helped ease the worry for thousands of parents across our community.**

In this newsletter, you will get a quick glimpse into the lives of some of the neighbors you have helped to worry a little less. You have fed the young, the old, and everything in between. In this issue you will meet Mike and Melissa, a young veteran family, who used to worry if they were going to have enough to eat. You'll meet Nareth, who used to worry about having the resources to provide proper nutrition for the three seniors in her life. And you will also meet Francisco and Madeline who were tired of just worrying about who had enough to eat and now work tirelessly to deploy the resources you have made available to feed our community daily.

There are a lot of things to worry about. Hunger shouldn't be one of them.

Kym Dildine
co-CEO



PROVIDING COMFORT AND FAMILIARITY IN EVERY FOOD BOX

We are so excited to announce our partnership with the Asian Business Institute and Resource Center (ABIRC) to acquire culturally appropriate foods that meet the needs of the diverse communities we serve.

This collaboration is an extension of the *BIPOC Small Farmer Engagement Initiative* we launched last summer to work with local disadvantaged farmers, specifically Black, Indigenous, and People of Color to purchase culturally appropriate fresh fruits and vegetables and distribute them in the communities where they're grown.

In addition to the produce (mustard and collard greens, nopales, bok choy, zucchini, tomatoes, strawberries) we're distributing through our *BIPOC Initiative*, ABIRC's expertise has helped us curate specialty boxes that include staples commonly found in Southeast Asian households, such as bamboo shoots, noodles, rice, and familiar canned goods and spices.

Connecting us with HER Supermarket, one of the first Southeast Asian stores in Fresno, has been invaluable to our Food Acquisitions team. This partnership not only helps provide culturally appropriate products to our neighbors in need but also helps enhance economic stability for our under-represented BIPOC farmers and stimulates the local ethnic market economy.

Offering our neighbors familiar items they feel confident cooking that meet their cultural and dietary needs is a priority for Central California Food Bank.

"This is the base level of what we should be doing to serve our community," says CCFB co-CEO Natalie Caples. "Showing up at a food pantry is probably one of the most challenging things that a neighbor can do. Especially on hard days when they have to decide between food or gas, being able to take home a box with food they recognize has to provide some comfort."

We are so grateful for partnerships like the ones with ABIRC and our local BIPOC farmers that help meet the needs of our richly diverse Central Valley!

POCKETS OF HUNGER IN EVERY COMMUNITY

If you live in the Central Valley, you don't expect students in Clovis Unified School District to suffer from food insecurity, but there are pockets of hunger in every community. Jefferson Elementary is a perfect example: serving disproportionately more disadvantaged students in an otherwise wealthy school district, Jefferson's Student Relations Liaison, Francisco Gutierrez, and Librarian, Madeline Pereira, experience firsthand the effects of kids coming to school hungry.

During the pandemic, it wasn't uncommon for them to meet families at Walmart to purchase necessities such as food, many times out of their own pockets. As Francisco and Madeline continued to see a rise in families struggling to meet their basic needs, this dynamic duo knew something had to be done. We are so proud to partner with Jefferson Elementary to open the first Full Choice School Pantry in Clovis, CA!

"Central California Food Bank has helped us build a bridge with those families that typically fall under the radar, those families who are scared

to speak up when they're in need, or those families who don't know how to access the resources that are available to them," Francisco says.

Jefferson's "BlueJay Pantry" is open weekly and operates a Full Choice model that provides a dignified experience, allowing families to handpick the food they take home based on their household, cultural, and dietary needs.

We are honored to partner with schools like Jefferson Elementary, whose staff work tirelessly to ensure that their students and families have the food they need to thrive and grow!



HELPING STRETCH TIGHT BUDGETS

At Central California Food Bank, not only do we provide nourishment to our neighbors, but we also pride ourselves on being able to connect those in need with resources like CalFresh benefits, that can help stretch tight budgets even further.

CalFresh is a food assistance program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture. It provides low-income families and individuals a monthly allowance to purchase nutritious food items such as fruits, vegetables, and shelf-stable items at most grocery stores and farmer's markets. CalFresh benefits not only help stretch food budgets, but the program also provides economic benefits to communities. It is estimated that for every dollar spent on CalFresh, \$1.50 in economic activity is generated.

Our CalFresh Outreach Team works throughout Fresno, Madera, Tulare, and Kings counties to provide application assistance and case management for food-insecure households. Our team also conducts broader community education for vulnerable populations including low-income families with children, seniors, college students, rural communities, and areas of high poverty.

Neighbors like Nareth from Tulare County have greatly benefited from our outreach assistance. She learned about and applied for CalFresh while out at one of our Neighborhood Markets. With no other additional income, these food-assistance benefits are essential to help purchase Asian foods that Nareth's parents can enjoy and eat. As the authorized representative of three monolingual seniors, Nareth appreciated how easy we made it to apply for CalFresh, which can be overwhelming if you're not familiar with the process.

Our CalFresh Outreach team helps over 1,500 families and individuals apply for benefits each year.

NUTRITIOUS FOOD FOR OUR RURAL COMMUNITIES

Did you know each and every month, Central California Food Bank has over 100 Neighborhood Market and Mobile Pantry distributions that provide fresh fruit and vegetables to our neighbors in low-income and rural communities? We are proud to announce that UnitedHealthcare (UHC) has recognized our efforts to address the lack of access to healthy foods in underserved communities by awarding CCFB with an *Empowering Health Grant*. We are one of seven community-based organizations in California to receive this award.

UHC funding will add a new Mobile Pantry truck to our fleet, allowing our team to distribute even more fresh produce to our neighbors in need. This grant is also supporting our nutrition education efforts and providing funds for culturally appropriate recipe cards and nutrition information that will be distributed alongside the fruits and vegetables every month. These resources will help guide neighbors in preparing nutritious meals with the items they receive at our distributions.



Jacqueline Burke, our Community Programs Manager, who is also a Registered Dietician, is ecstatic about the opportunity to enhance our nutrition education efforts.

“While our Neighborhood Markets help increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables, there are times when neighbors receive items they’ve never prepared or tasted before. Our goal is to provide them with nutrition resources that not only celebrate the diversity of fresh produce we provide but also offer preparation ideas that align with their cultural and household needs.”

We are so grateful for UHC’s support and commitment to the health and well-being of our neighbors in underserved communities.



PLEASE JOIN US FOR EMPTY BOWLS 2023

We are so excited for our annual Empty Bowls Dinner! Our first “in-person” event last year was a huge success, and we hope to fill the room again! You won’t want to miss our fantastic silent auction, wine pull, dinner program, and more.

Each attendee will walk away with a hand-crafted ceramic bowl by a local artist or student to remember those who do not have enough to eat in our community. Purchase tickets online TODAY!

WHEN:

Thursday, May 11,
2023 at 5:30pm

WHERE:

Clovis Veterans
Memorial District

INDIVIDUAL TICKETS:

\$75 per person

TABLE FOR 10:

\$800 | Sponsorships
available

Find more information at
www.ccfoodbank.org/emptybowls



CONTACT US

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*To learn more or to make a donation,
visit ccfoodbank.org.*

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