

## THE ARIZONA PARTNERSHIP TO END CHILDHOOD HUNGER

**Imagine ...** a place where every child eats nutritious meals every day. Where no child ever goes to bed worrying about where his or her next meal will come from.



**Imagine...** guaranteeing all children the nourishment they need to grow up healthy, develop properly, learn and succeed in school, and have an opportunity for a better life.

**Imagine...** ensuring that all Arizona residents achieve the financial security, education and access to good food that enables them to provide for their children's nutritional needs.

**Imagine...** this diverse, fast-moving community bringing together people from all walks of life to solve a challenging social problem many once thought impossible.

*This is not a pipe dream. Rather, it is what Arizona will look like in 2018 if Arizona's state and local government, business leaders, faith and community organizations and residents pull together to end childhood hunger.*

Our communities already possess the tools, resources and expertise to properly feed the hundreds of thousands of Arizona children who suffer from, or live on the edge of, hunger.

All we need to do is harness and mobilize these assets in pursuit of practical, cost-effective solutions that improve access to nutrition and help families help themselves.

To make this vision a reality, the Arizona Partnership to End Childhood Hunger — a collaborative effort between families, state and local government, faith and community based organizations, volunteers and anti-hunger professionals have developed and will implement these strategies to end childhood hunger in Arizona within the next 10 years.

Childhood hunger is like a hidden virus ... it is silently but relentlessly undermining the health and

learning potential of our children, it is deteriorating the social fabric of our communities and wreaking havoc on the state's economy. An estimated 744,000 Arizona children suffer from hunger, miss meals or have an improper diet. The future of these children is precarious because the impact of even mild under-nutrition can be devastating - impaired brain function, long-term emotional and health problems, increased need for special education, and stunted physical and mental development.

Our communities have the power to end childhood hunger that persists in our midst, afflicting the lives of hundred's of thousands of children who are our sons and daughters ... our friends ... our future leaders.

The lack of regular access to nutritious food, which results in both hunger and poor quality diets, prevents children from learning in school. It causes a host of health problems ranging from anemia and stunted growth to obesity.

Hunger denies opportunity and limits children's dreams. For a child, hunger devastates the present by creating lack of confidence and self-esteem when even the most basic of life's necessities are not provided in early years, and it destroys the future. It also burdens our government, our society and our communities with billions of dollars in medical, educational, economic and social costs.

### Three Main Causes of Childhood Hunger

- Lack of income due to a combination of low wages and rising costs
- Lack of access to federal nutrition programs due to barriers and lack of information
- Lack of understanding of the impact to childhood development resulting from poor nutrition

### **We WILL End Childhood Hunger**

Though these causes are complex, solving the problem of childhood hunger is not. We recognize the large social structure to create the foundation for this achievement also includes elements such as adequate household income, healthcare, housing, and education. But, we need not reinvent the wheel, or get mired in taking on a huge agenda. As first steps, to assure there is food for children, is a community-wide mobilization to:

- Provide better information for parents and children; and

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- Increase access to healthy food;
- Improve economic supports so families can afford good food.
- Bring the existing framework of federal food and nutrition programs to scale so they benefit every child in need and at risk



## **Family, School and Community**

We will end childhood hunger in Arizona through a core strategy to surround all the state's children with reliable access to nutritious food every place that touches their lives — in the **family**, at **school** and throughout the **community**.

We will reach children in the **family** by working to improve their economic security by increasing their financial literacy, job training and placement, increasing families' understanding of the need for nutritious food supported by participation in Food Stamps and the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and by ensuring sustained access to Arizona's network of food banks and pantries.



We will reach children at **school** by making free school breakfasts available to all eligible students, by improving the nutritional quality and appeal of all school meals, and by encouraging that school-based after-school and summer food programs receive federal funding for nutritious meals and snacks and are fully available to children in need.

And we will reach children throughout the **community** by expanding participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), the federal after-school snack and supper program, and the Summer Food Service Program. In addition, we will spearhead the promotion of available affordable, fresh produce in low income neighborhood supermarkets, grocery stores and farmers' markets so that all families at risk have access to, affordable, fresh produce.

## **Our Vision**

Every child in Arizona will have access to the nutritious food they need to learn, grow and thrive in their families, at school and throughout their communities.

## **Our Mission**

Our mission is to end childhood hunger, in Arizona

## **End Results**

We will know we have achieved our vision and mission when every child in Arizona receives three nutritious meals — each and every day.

## **Currently**

The Food Stamp Program serves only 50% of the potentially eligible individuals

The School Breakfast Program serves only 39.8% of the children qualified for free or reduced price School Lunch.

12.8% of these same children are participating in the Summer Food Service Program— ranking Arizona dead last among the U.S. in feeding children when school is out of session.

64% of potentially eligible women, infants and children are participating in the WIC program.

30% of those eligible have access to the the Commodity Supplemental Food Program with assigned limits of 15,800 slots for women, children to age 6, and low income elderly who are approved to participate.

## **A Smart Investment**

The efforts to end childhood hunger in Arizona will increase participation rates in Federal Nutrition Programs which will potentially bring millions annually in currently unclaimed federal dollars into the Arizona economy, producing direct dividends of \$7.00 for each \$1.00 invested in ending childhood hunger. But the benefits will extend far beyond this. We will see lower Medicaid costs, improved academic performance, reduced social service demands, a stronger economy, and a better quality of life in Arizona's neighborhoods when all children receive the food and nutrition they need.

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## ***Affordable, Achievable, Accountable***

This plan will work. It is practical, affordable and realistic. It is built on federal nutrition programs that have proven effective in combating hunger and on other strategies that have also stood the tests of time and experience.

In addition, the plan is designed to succeed and to serve as a model that communities across Arizona can replicate.

## ***An Invitation***

This is an invitation — **a call to action** for all Arizonans to join this Partnership.

Everyone who lives, works, learns, and plays in Arizona has a stake in the outcome of this mission. Our children, our families, our quality of life, our economy and our future will all gain from the elimination of childhood hunger.

We know it **CAN** happen — our children are counting on us!

The partners who have brought this effort together and include participants from families, business, faith community, the nonprofit sector and local and state government — will be fully accountable for meeting the strategies set out in this plan. But our ultimate success will depend upon the active involvement of everyone who lives, works, or has a stake in Arizona's future.

## **Partners Already On-board**

### **Our Sponsor – The DES Hunger Advisory Council**

- The Arizona Statewide Gleaning Project
- The Food and Research Action Center
- Association of Arizona Food Banks
- The Society of St. Vincent De Paul
- St. Luke's Health Initiative
- Food For The Hungry
- Arizona Department of Economic Security
- Perryville Women's Correctional Facility – Santa Cruz Unit
- Arizona Department of Health Services
- Litchfield Unified School District
- St. Mary's Food Bank
- Neighborhood Ministries
- Valley of the Sun United Way
- North Phoenix Baptist Church
- World Hunger Education, Advocacy and Training
- Arizona Department of Education
- The Navajo County Community Network Team
- Arizona Community Action Association
- United Food Bank
- United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona
- Arizona Department of Agriculture
- Yuma Food Bank
- Peoria Unified School District
- Community Food Bank
- West Valley Human Services Alliance
- ASU Partnership for Community Development
- Community Food Connections

**Please consider joining the Partnership!**

Stay Connected – [www.endchildhungeraz.org](http://www.endchildhungeraz.org)

This plan has been adapted from the *Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in the Nation's Capital* and is currently supported through funding and technical assistance from the *Food and Research Action Center*.

## 10 Key Strategies

To maximize existing family, community, state and federal resources to end childhood hunger in Arizona!



### **Encourage Healthy Food Choices.**

To help all Arizona families have the knowledge, skills and motivation to make healthy food choices, we will conduct a coordinated statewide education campaign, empowering parents to make good nutrition decisions for their children.



### **Help After-School Programs Provide Healthy Meals and Snacks.**

We will encourage Arizona providers of after-school programs to participate in the federal snack and supper programs and will serve all children in need. Federal funding will enhance their ability to provide healthy snacks in the afternoon and dinner for children whose parents work long hours.



### **Increase Families' Access to Affordable, Fresh Produce.**

By working with local government, the private sector and the agricultural community, we will increase access to neighborhood supermarkets, grocery stores or farmers' markets selling affordable, fresh produce.



**Expand the Reach of the Summer Food Service Program.** By helping all Arizona providers of summer programs to participate in the Summer Food Service Program, we will make sure they serve all eligible children, youth and adults in need. Building on the success of the Summer Food Service Program, we will fill a vital seasonal gap in healthy eating for many children who participate in the school breakfast and lunch programs the rest of the year.



### **Improve Working Families' Economic Security.**

By encouraging low-income Arizona residents to claim the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) which can provide a vital income supplement. Establish Individual Development Accounts (IDA) to grow assets. Provide career development opportunities to move families toward economic security, utilizing existing resources in financial education and job training.



**Maximize Participation in the Food Stamp Program.** Food stamps are the number one means by which low-income families receive the support they need to purchase nutritious food — but one-half of those who are eligible do not receive them. We will minimize the barriers to access and information that currently prevent people from receiving needed benefits.



### **Provide Comprehensive Public Education about Available Assistance.**

To ensure all eligible Arizona families know about the food and nutrition programs available to them. We will use aggressive, targeted, multilingual, community-based outreach to end the information deficit.



### **Ensure Access to a Nutritious Diet for all Pregnant Women and Preschool Children.**

WIC, which assists pregnant women and their newborn babies, and Child and Adult Care Food Program, which funds meals provided to low-income preschool children, are highly successful programs not yet reaching all eligible participants.



### **Maximize Participation in the Federal School Breakfast & Lunch Program.**

We will ensure Arizona children get breakfast and lunch by maximizing participation in the successful federal School Breakfast & Lunch Program.



### **Ensure Access to Nutritious Food in Shelters and Food Pantries.**

All low-income families in Arizona will have access to nutritious food in family shelters and neighborhood food pantries.