



Voice of the Hungry Action Plan

May 2010

**Planning conducted by the Verde Food Council
A Project of Cornucopia Community Advocates**

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Everybody Eats!

Planning Panel Participants

Listed alphabetically

Jill Barnes, Arizona Dept. of Economic Security

Susan Barrington, Sedona Community Center

Rachael Collins, Business Consultant - Homeless

Brett Falcon, Verde Valley Caregivers

Ron Goldman, Verde Valley Caregivers

Annika Head, Beaver Creek School

Sandie Hensley, St. Andrews Episcopal Church

Joe Hirt, St Vincent de Paul Society, St. John Vianney Conference

Vince Kaczynski, Retired, Volunteer

Lindsey Laubinger, Full-time Mom

Marie Leonard, Retired, Volunteer

Jay Maloney, Business Consultant, Volunteer

Catherine Rourke, Journalist – Verde Valley (Homeless)

Laura Wynne, Retired, Volunteer



VERDE FOOD COUNCIL

Voice of the Hungry Action Plan - 2010

OUR COMMUNITY CAN WORK TOGETHER FOR THE MISSION OF ENSURING THAT “EVERYBODY EATS!”

This mission can be accomplished not only by extending local emergency food resources and financial support for those in need, but also by empowering people through community education programs in job search and creation, gardening, agriculture, and food preparation and preservation. We need to include agricultural cooperative extension services, local agricultural programs, government agencies, faith-based organizations, nonprofits and schools on all levels in community planning and achievement toward this common goal.

The **Verde Food Council** wanted to obtain a consumer’s view of food distribution to the hungry in the Verde Valley. On May 7, 2010 it convened a panel of 17 persons to identify gaps in food services to the hungry. Of those, 8 were persons who currently utilized emergency food services, and 9 persons who worked in delivering food to the hungry in a variety of services. Two persons were both hungry and homeless.

During the action planning process, panel members began by sharing their personal stories. In three small groups, they drew “the face of hunger in the Verde Valley” and then began the process of identifying gaps in food services.

This panel came together a second time on May 14, 2010 to:

- Review the previously identified gaps in food availability;
- Review and expand strategies to address gaps;
- Develop an Action Plan and an Action Team to improve food availability in the Verde Valley.



17 emergency food recipients and food providers identify gaps in services.

The planning process in each session gave us valuable information about priority gaps and action strategies for bridging the gaps that currently limit the food services that are most needed at this time. When services are created out of a recognized community need, it is important that those services be reviewed regularly to determine their overall effectiveness as changes develop within those communities and the region. The Verde Food Council is doing just that and has determined that recent changes in the economy, including housing foreclosures and rising unemployment, as well as recent studies on the growing numbers of our population suffering from obesity, diabetes and heart disease, require communities to come together to address these needs from a more comprehensive, regional angle. We need to address how we can combine resources to promote *self-sufficiency* for individuals and families and *sustainable agriculture* in our region.

Verde Food Council - Voice of the Hungry Action Plan

MISSION: *“To build community support for meeting the needs of the hungry; to increase the production and distribution of locally grown, healthy food; and to be a voice for the hungry.”*

We envision communities where:

- There is no more hunger.
- We treat our hungry neighbors with respect.
- Healthy, fresh food is grown locally and shared.
- Self-sufficiency is realized by all.

The goal of this plan is to bring together an Action Team that will create and implement strategies of an action plan that overcomes the food service gaps identified in this plan, bringing the above mission and vision into reality in the Verde Valley.



Participants of the Voice of the Hungry panel, sponsored by the Verde Food Council, identify gaps in local food resources for the growing numbers of our neighbors in need.

Three community action arenas emerged from the discussion of service gaps: 1) Community education gaps; 2) Limited emergency food resources; and 3) Lack of collaboration among emergency food resources.

I. COMMUNITY EDUCATION

GAPS: Insufficient training/education in local sustainability:

- Lack of promotion of community service information and referral services.
- Lack of classes in self-sufficient living skills.
- Lack of “green” job training in agriculture and community sustainability.
- Lack of community classes in nutrition, healthy cooking & growing food (all ages).
- More effectively communicate the need for donations and volunteers.
- Need for coordinators of volunteers for emergency food providers.
- Need a program to reach hungry, yet reluctant persons to overcome the negative stigma of going to food banks and other emergency food providers.

STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS:

1. Increase Farm-to-School Programs
 - a. Bring gardeners into every school in the VV to teach on-site gardening skills including soil preparation, composting, irrigation, seed propagation, etc. Gardening can be integrated with biology, ecology, chemistry, geology, math, history and other subject areas as hands-on learning opportunities.
 - b. Bring skilled cooks to every school in the VV to teach hands-on nutrition, food preservation and preparation classes. * (See note below.)
 - c. Encourage children to teach their parents/families what they are learning in school and to begin gardens in their own backyards.
2. Expand these educational programs into local communities, providing the same opportunities for persons of all ages.
3. In collaboration with the Sedona Community Center, provide public education about the benefits of the Time Bank Network bartering system and how it can take the “pinch” out of “penny pinching.” This network also provides incentives for more volunteerism, as people are able to *get back* from their *giving*.
4. Work with the Cooperative Extension and other community education programs to offer training for more “green jobs” created by a “new vision” of community sustainability.
5. Offer regular Community Round Tables to educate the public about local needs, resources and the “untapped potential” within each community.
 - a. Invite legislative representatives for Q & A sessions on community-building and ways to tap into priority resources through the legislative process.

- b. Invite panels of local food resource providers to answer questions, provide networking opportunities and generate more interest in volunteerism.
 - c. Invite government agencies such as DES, WIC and AHCCCS to explain their program opportunities and limits.
 - d. Invite local businesses and Chambers of Commerce to discuss how they can participate in connecting more dots between needs and resources.
 - e. Invite farmers and growers to answer questions and network in sharing information and possible creation of “Farm to Table Neighborhood Co-ops.”
6. Distribute Verde Valley Emergency Food Resources Directory and food research information to DES, NACOG, Catholic Charities, Faith-based organizations, food banks, libraries, schools, doctor’s offices, hospitals, grocery stores, etc.
 7. Support food banks by training volunteers to provide “consumer intakes” to better meet the needs of each individual seeking assistance, so that people who “show up” don’t fall through the cracks. Some clients can also be recruited as volunteers.

* Nutrition, cooking and gardening classes are vitally important to the overall success of this program, as a strategy for decreasing the numbers of our population struggling with obesity and diabetes (especially in children). Such classes support each person in making healthy food choices. This will be accomplished much more easily when healthy, fresh, local produce is available to everyone at an affordable price. The more community and backyard gardens we can promote and facilitate, the more fresh produce will be available to the residents of the Verde Valley.

II. RESOURCE ENRICHMENT (OVERCOMING LIMITED RESOURCES)

GAPS: Lack of resources in time, energy, physical space and goods:

- Food banks and pantries need more storage space - both refrigerated and non-refrigerated spaces.
- Limited transportation:
 - a. Of hungry persons to community hot meals.
 - b. Home delivery of food to the homebound.
 - c. Of food from distribution centers to food banks and pantries.
- Lack of networking/coordination between emergency food providers causes gaps in services – on some days each week, **no** emergency food resources are available.
- Limited hours of availability and out-of-the way locations of food banks cause limited access to these resources.
- Lack of volunteers to expand services beyond what is now offered (everyone is maxed!).
- Lack of funding to expand programs to meet the expanding needs of every community.
- When emergency resources run out, healthy food is too expensive to buy.
- Many consumers resist using emergency food services due to stigma/pride.

STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS:

1. Create a VV Emergency Food Providers Association, holding monthly meetings to coordinate and combine efforts and resources whenever possible for the purpose of increasing both efficiency and availability of food.
2. Expand food banks and pantries into community gathering/education centers for both peer and multi-generational mentoring, social gathering and enrichment classes, making them more “socially acceptable” and publicly visible. Food banks can be combined with senior centers where appropriate.
3. Work with **Verde Valley Caregivers** to create a *Volunteer Training Program* for basic training of volunteers who will work at emergency food programs throughout the Verde Valley.
4. Develop a volunteer recruitment campaign to supply volunteers for all emergency food providers.
5. Improve transportation:
 - a. Campbell Soup (food label) campaign to use the credits received from labels to purchase a delivery vehicle to be shared by food banks.
 - b. Contact car dealers for vehicle donations to emergency food providers.
 - c. Collaborate with city transportation to make stops at food banks and pantries.
 - d. Work with city planners to post road signs directed to food banks.
6. Storage Space:
 - a. Lease-to-own buildings for new sites.
 - b. Rent reimbursement for tax write-offs.
 - c. Develop Bread of Life as a walk-in distribution center.
 - d. Share space with other organizations.
7. Funding:

- a. Find funding/donations for updating equipment - refrigeration, power jacks, etc.
- b. Find retired fundraising professionals to help.
- c. Golf ball drop and other fundraising events.
- d. Service club contributions of funds and volunteers.
- e. Faith organizations' contributions of funds and volunteers.
- f. Engage city/town/community councils in helping the hungry in VV.
- g. Network more closely with foundations and other funding sources to stay on top of funding possibilities.
- h. Market one or two pieces of jewelry to raise "hunger awareness" and funds to support Verde Food Council programs and network.

III. COMMUNITY COLLABORATION (OVERCOMING RESOURCE ISOLATION)

GAPS: Insufficient local and regional networking/communication among the following agencies/organizations:

- Government agencies and officials, including DES, NACOG, AHCCCS, legislators, and local policy makers.
- Agricultural organizations and small farmers:
 - A. Master Gardeners.
 - B. Gardens for Humanity.
 - C. Permaculture networks and resources.
 - D. Local businesses who provide landscaping/gardening goods and services.
 - E. U.S. Forestry Service.
 - F. Renewable and sustainable energy resources.
- Local transportation businesses and services.
- Emergency food service providers.
- Faith-based organizations.
- Schools and community education organizations.
- Healthcare providers.
- Local animal refuge centers and animal supply centers to get food for consumers' pets.
- Other nonprofit organizations and community leaders who may have similar goals and/or want to adopt the above mission and vision for this region.
- Stronger connections with media through press releases, feature articles, use of community calendars for upcoming events, etc.

STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS:

1. Invite each food bank to adopt 2-3 faith-based organizations as partners for expanding available resources (human, monetary and otherwise).
2. Work more closely with DES to distribute VV Emergency Food Directory to all SNAP recipients and to all who apply but are denied benefits and to support training of volunteers to help consumers complete SNAP Applications.
3. Create a plan with St. Mary's Food Bank to expand services and food availability as well as accessibility in the VV.
4. Work with city transportation officials so local busses will stop at food banks on the days they are open.
5. Strengthen alliances with agricultural organizations creating a plan to increase production and distribution of locally grown produce, meat and poultry.
6. Continue working with Yavapai College to develop agricultural and green curricula.
7. Utilize Master Gardener's program to develop individual and community gardens.
8. Motivate local growers to deliver harvest excesses to food providers.
9. Change city ordinances to allow raising animals and poultry in residential areas.
10. Encourage cities to promote community gardens.
11. Encourage WIC and SNAP partnership with local farmers markets.

12. Expand the Food for the Homebound Program throughout the VV.

The following action team was nominated, and each nominee will be contacted to determine willingness and interest in participating in forming Action Committees to address the above issues in addition to exploring additional strategies to address and overcome the identified gaps in services.

Proposed Voice of the Hungry Action Team

<u>NAME</u>	<u>AFFILIATION</u>
Debra Emmanuelle	Verde Food Council Coordinator
Jay Maloney	Business Consultant/Volunteer
Richard Sidy	Gardens for Humanity
Catherine Rourke	Editor, Journalist
Jill Barnes	Arizona Depart. Economic Security
Carrie Lightfoot	Old Town Mission
Jennifer Young	Master Gardener Program
Sylvia Strobel	Sedona Food Bank
Stephanie Shank	4-H Club Coordinator
Melinda Swiger	Verde Valley Sanctuary
Lindsey Laubinger	Full-time Mom
Nita Marlette	WIC, Nutrition Program Mgr.
Susan Barrington	Sedona Community Center
Gordon and Gayleen Kelsey	St. Vincent de Paul, Camp Verde
Melanie Underwood	Lighthouse Mission
Brett Williams	Lighthouse Mission
Keith Davis	Community member
Barbara Litrell	City Council Member

June 8, 2010 Version