

# FOOD For THOUGHT



FALL NEWSLETTER 2024



## FIND Food Bank's Annual Telethon Raised Nearly \$300,000 to Help End Hunger in the Desert

Without fail, every year, FIND is overwhelmed by the widespread community support for

our Telethon, and this year was no different. It was a night of joy, reflection, and hope — a reminder that when passion and purpose collide, there is no limit to what a community can achieve together.

This vital fundraising campaign, held on Friday, April 5<sup>th</sup> at the FIND warehouse, rallied the community together. Volunteers and staff worked tirelessly behind the scenes, their smiles and shared vision a testament to the spirit of togetherness that defined the night; while viewers at home were inspired to donate, knowing their contributions would make a tangible difference.

From interviews with local city representatives to testimonials from community partners, stories of hope and resilience filled the airwaves — as well as the sounds of local musicians and performers. Entertainment included dance troupe, In Movement Dance, the Indio Middle School Color Guard, and Whitewater, a Coachella Valley rock

band. Presentations by FIND's Youth Advisory Commission illustrated that the fight against hunger also means securing a brighter future for the younger generation.

Considerable donations were made by Desert Oasis Healthcare, Desert Care Network, State Farm, Visit Greater Palm Springs, Intersect Power, American Express Foundation, Western Wind, and the City of La Quinta.

“Over Telethon weekend, we were thrilled to have brought in additional support from donors like the Auen Foundation,” said Debbie Espinosa, FIND's President and CEO. “And a special thank you to the H.N. & Frances C. Berger Foundation, whose Impact Grant brought our 2024 Telethon total to \$300,000.”

Debbie said all \$300,000 will be used towards programs for those who are food insecure throughout the Coachella Valley. **Together, we made a tangible difference in the lives of those who need it most, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to ending hunger.**

## KIDS Summer Market Recap



For over a decade FIND has partnered with schools and community organizations for our KIDS Summer Market Program, ensuring children have access to healthy foods during summer vacation. As many Coachella Valley students rely on school meal programs, they become more food insecure once class is dismissed for summer. Together with 41

distribution sites, FIND supplemented those lost meals and snacks. Over the 10-week program from June to August, we worked with Riverside County of Education and Read With Me Volunteers to include over 10,000 books in our summer market bags. **Together we are feeding bodies and minds to create healthy and strong youth in our community.**





## Message From President and CEO Debbie Espinosa

In the summer months, FIND's volunteer and donor partnerships are crucial in ensuring that the community has access to food, especially during times of crisis. With reduced work opportunities, the summer can be an agonizing time for our Coachella Valley residents. Extra pressure is put on parents as children lack access to school meal programs. And as food costs remain high, our working families have increased difficulty meeting the need for extra meals while their children are home.

Because of the seasonality of our community, FIND Food Bank loses 60% of our active volunteer base. The snowbird population makes up the majority of our volunteers and a significant portion of our financial support. Without additional summer support, many members of our community no longer have access to dependable food.

**To those who selflessly donated their time and resources to FIND, despite the heat and busy summer schedules, THANK YOU! With each hour dedicated, each meal distributed, and each person served, you made a profound difference in the lives of those facing food insecurity.**

Volunteers, donors, and corporate supporters all played a vital role in combating summer hunger, collaborating to make a tangible impact on the lives of those in need. Through food drives, financial contributions, and hands-on assistance, your collective efforts helped bridge the gap between surplus and scarcity. It's a testament to what can be achieved when we come together with a shared purpose and a compassionate heart. By working in unison, we can create a future where no one needs to wonder where their next meal will come from.



Debbie Espinosa,  
President and CEO,  
FIND Food Bank



## Guardians Annual Breakfast Event Honors FIND's Hunger Heroes

FIND's Guardians Breakfast serves as a showcase of the impact of community contributions in combating food insecurity. Attendees witness firsthand how their generous contributions are channeled toward vital programs and initiatives aimed at alleviating hunger and nourishing families across the region.

This year FIND Food Bank was proud to recognize two exceptional Hunger Heroes: our Community Partner, Linda Evans, and our Hunger Relief Advocate, Visit Greater Palm Springs. Each hero embodies FIND's mission of community advocacy and eradicating hunger in the Coachella Valley.

Sponsored by American Express and Renaissance Esmeralda Resort and Spa, the annual event served as a platform to express gratitude to the donors and stakeholders whose support fuels FIND Food Bank's programs.

"We are incredibly grateful for the exemplary support demonstrated by those who have continued to believe in

FIND's vision," said Debbie Espinosa, President and CEO of FIND Food Bank. "Their relentless dedication to our mission has been instrumental in driving progress and fostering positive change in the lives of children, families, and seniors who are food insecure."

**An inspiring and impactful morning, the event brought together community leaders, philanthropists, and advocates united in their commitment to build a hunger-free future for our neighbors.**



# College Corner

## A College Send Off: Four Students Graduate from FIND's Youth Advisory Commission

FIND Food Bank wishes continued success and greatness to the students who completed our Youth Advisory Commission program in May 2024. Because of your willingness to go above and beyond to speak out on food insecurity and help serve your community, FIND can develop creative new approaches to end child hunger. Thank you, graduates!



**Lauren Farrel**  
FYAC Membership  
Duration: 3 Years  
(Chairperson for 2 years)  
Attending University:  
University of California,  
Santa Barbara  
Major: Economics on a  
Pre-law Track



**Leyla Rizvanbegovic**  
FYAC Membership  
Duration: 3 Years  
Attending University:  
University of California,  
Santa Barbara  
Major: Biology



**Taliyah Randolph**  
FYAC Membership  
Duration: 3 Years  
Attending University:  
University of  
California, Davis  
Major: Communications



**Tatiyana Randolph**  
FYAC Membership  
Duration: 3 Years  
Attending University:  
University of  
California, Davis  
Major: Environmental  
Science and Technology

## FIND SUCCESS: College of the Desert 2024 Honorees and Inductees



This summer FIND welcomed its third cohort of College of the Desert students to our FIND SUCCESS program. In its second year, the program addresses the root causes of hunger by providing college students with opportunities to develop the skills needed to thrive in their careers and contribute to their communities, ultimately helping to break the cycle of food insecurity and poverty and promote economic mobility for college students within our community.

“Seeing how FIND Success has progressed has been really impactful for me because I am a College of the Desert Alumna,” said Lorena Marroquin, FIND’s Vice President of Community Impact. “This program allows our youth to advocate for their community and be a part of the bigger picture. As our students continue their journey to find success, whether it’s here in the Coachella Valley or transferring to another university, we hope they don’t ever forget they have the power to advocate for those who experience food insecurity.”

**In collaboration with local government, first and second cohort students were given Certificates of Congressional Recognition by Representative Assemblymember Greg Wallis, Representative Congressman Raul Ruiz, and Representative Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia.**

“This year taught me the significance of fighting against food insecurity, and the impact community service can have in people’s lives,” said FIND SUCCESS student Paulina Berdugo. “Being able to not only have the opportunity to lead but take part in my community has given me the strength to uplift so many people and see more smiles on their faces. My amazing fellows are now like family, and I am tremendously thankful for FIND and COD for giving me the platform to become a community leader.”

With FIND SUCCESS, students can acquire new skills and attain industry certifications through hands-on training at the FIND warehouse and throughout the community, empowering them to take the next stride toward a stable and fulfilling career.

“While I’m still learning, I have seen amazing growth in myself and the other fellows,” said Berdugo. “Before joining FIND SUCCESS, I did not feel connected to others. Now I feel connected to my community, my college, and my neighbors. It has inspired me to do better, to be better, and, most importantly, to be part of something that matters.”

**Due to the achievements of College of the Desert students, this year FIND will expand its community partnerships to Copper Mountain Community College, California State University San Bernardino, Palo Verde Community College, and Coachella Valley Adult School.**



# The CalFresh Resource Event at FIND Food Bank Provided On-the-Spot Community Benefits

May is dedicated to increasing public awareness of CalFresh through state, county, and community-based organizations that provide outreach and assistance in their communities. CalFresh, federally known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), is a California administered benefits program helping households that have low incomes buy a greater amount of healthy, nutritious food for themselves.

For CalFresh Awareness Month, Coachella Valley residents were able to apply in person for CalFresh food benefits, Medi-Cal, rental, and utility assistance, and receive free food, non-food, and household necessities at FIND Food Bank's CalFresh Resource Fair.

Held at Indio's American Legion Post, community members were greeted by smiles from booths of representatives from 25 community organizations. Coachella Valley residents had the opportunity to receive on-the-spot application assistance, educational materials, workshops,

and walk out with food and other necessities.

**“FIND Food Bank hosted the resource fair during CalFresh Awareness Month to inform the community of the food benefits they may be missing out on,”** explained

Lorena Marroquin, Vice President of Community Impact at FIND Food Bank. **“We took the opportunity to connect residents with other community-based programs that offer financial assistance and resources. Gas and grocery prices are causing more people to return to our food lines, and we want the community to know they are not alone. These programs are designed to help them get back on their feet.”**



## Amazon Partners with FIND to Combat Summer Hunger

During the summer months when working families have limited access to reliable job opportunities and children lose access to free school meal programs, FIND Food Bank relies on

the dedication and generosity of organizations like Amazon. For the third consecutive year, Amazon made a summer trip to FIND's warehouse for a day of giving, volunteering, and celebration — helping us achieve our food drive goals.

Attended by local government officials and volunteers, Amazon's Head of Community Engagement and Public Policy, David Ambroz, presented FIND's President and CEO Debbie Espinosa a \$45,000 check to fight summer hunger.

Alongside the generous donation was a van loaded with 900 pounds of food and nonperishable items collected from Amazon operations across Southern California. Twenty-five volunteers from Amazon's employee-driven community

service group, People Serving People (PSP1), unloaded the donated goods and packaged nearly 700 bags of fresh produce for same-day delivery to FIND distribution sites.

**“We know that FIND Food Bank supports a lot of families in need ... and we want to be part of that solution, so we are here today donating funds to provide 180,000 meals, along with nonperishable food items, feminine hygiene products, and even car seats to support other critical family needs,”** explained David Ambroz.

**Amazon remains steadfast in its commitment to ending hunger through their annual partnership event, financial assistance, and volunteer service. We value their consistent support of FIND's hunger relief efforts in the Greater Coachella Valley and Hi-Desert communities.**

Support FIND Food Bank, and you too can help feed the 125,000 adults, children, and seniors we provide with food assistance across California's southeastern desert region every month.

Follow us on:   

**FINDFoodBank.org**

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#FINDaWaytoEndHunger

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