

UNITE

to End Hunger.



Faces of Hunger in Maricopa County

A plan to end chronic hunger



LIVE UNITED.

The Everyday Face of Hunger

Meet Grace

Grace is like many third graders in our community with hopes and dreams of becoming a veterinarian. She plays with her friends and works hard at school each day. But something is getting in the way of her ability to focus in class and on her future.

As the school year ends, Grace's classmates are enthusiastically sharing plans of vacation and pool parties – they can't wait for the final day to arrive.

But Grace isn't excited. The thought of summer fills her with dread. Every school morning she comes to the cafeteria where her teacher greets her with a smile and breakfast. At lunch it's the same – a warm smile and tray full of food.

Grace carefully scans each meal, seeing what she can tuck in her backpack for dinner – a roll, an apple, maybe a little dessert. On Friday she only eats half of her meals and quietly tucks some away to help her through the long, hungry weekend. Sometimes she hides it all away so she can also share it with her younger brother.

But summer is almost here and she can't ask for enough rolls to get her through. What will she do? Where will she eat? Her nine-year-old stomach starts to knot with worry.

As a community we want all our children to succeed in school and nutrition plays a key role in their ability to focus and learn. Without this basic necessity, they are unable to fulfill their true potential. Far too often, Grace and many other local children worry about finding their next meal instead of how to solve math problems.



Young Face of Hunger:

The story of "Grace" represents the true daily lives of many children in our community.

Hunger Affects More Than Innocent Children: It Impacts Us All

Hunger doesn't just affect children like Grace. Research shows there are also seniors, single parents, pregnant mothers, individuals with disabilities and others living below the poverty line fighting chronic hunger.

Their struggles, their pain hurts us all. How?

- Hungry children are unable to focus on school, threatening educational success
- Hunger reduces worker productivity, lowering economic prosperity
- Hunger diminishes the health of young children and seniors, creating additional physical, emotional and mental challenges
- Hunger impacts the entire community which is currently armed to respond only with emergency solutions to this critical challenge

Community Assessment: Many Mouths To Feed

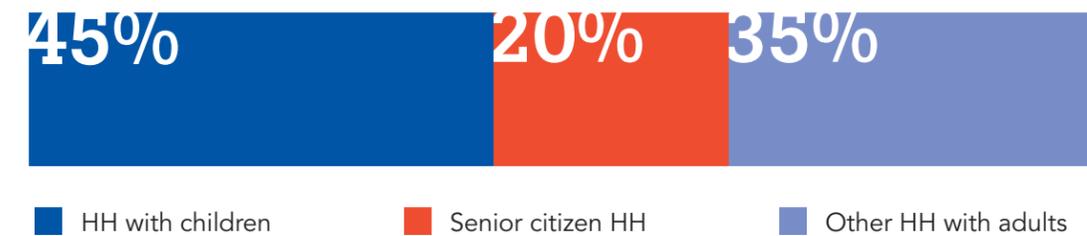
One in five Arizonans live below the federal poverty line and record numbers of Valley residents continue to turn to local food banks for assistance. Current need is great and threatens to overwhelm our local network of resources and support services. Hunger can affect people of any age, race or educational background.

The Assessment:

Valley of the Sun United Way and the Association of Arizona Food Banks (Aafb) gathered quantitative and qualitative data to develop a comprehensive assessment of hunger in Maricopa County. The data guided the development of a long-term plan to create a hunger-free community. The plan relies primarily on rigorous food-security research conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as well as national and local best practices for reducing hunger. Additionally, data from several state government departments was reviewed to help determine how to best reach and serve people in Maricopa County who are experiencing chronic hunger.

The analysis demonstrates that **approximately 82,000 households in Maricopa County struggle to put food on the table for themselves or their families.** The most severely impacted by chronic hunger are those who most need nutritious meals: **children and youth, single parents, pregnant women and seniors.**

Households (HH) Impacted by Chronic Hunger



The Faces of Hunger in Maricopa County

Every day, hunger strikes our community's most vulnerable residents. At a time when many individuals continue to struggle to make ends meet, others are faced with the lack of access to, or knowledge of, existing nutrition programs to combat their struggle with hunger, including:

School children during the school year and throughout the summer

- Only 29 percent of the eligible schools located in Maricopa County participated in the 2011 Summer Meals Program.
- 50 percent of the Summer 2011 sites operated for 5 weeks or less (school summer breaks are typically 10-12 weeks).

Seniors and adults with disabilities

- Approximately, 40 percent of congregate and home-delivered meal recipients indicate they ate only one meal a day.
- Only 10 percent of seniors receiving congregate or home-delivered meals said they ate three meals a day.

Pregnant women and pre-school children

- Less than a third of eligible women enroll in nutrition programs during their first trimester of pregnancy.
- Although children remain eligible for nutrition programs until age 5, too many families only participate up to seven months after birth.

The Everyday Face of Hunger

Meet Vae and Lou

Vae and Lou have been married 43 years and lived in the same house for 40 of those. Both had worked their entire lives until their recent retirement - Lou even served in the Air Force. After decades of independence, they never thought they'd need help. That was about to change after Lou's unexpected surgery.

Taught from a young age to make do or do without, it was time for Vae to figure out how to do without. Their fixed income was already stretched thin and despite owning their own home, new medical expenses from Lou's broken hip meant something had to give.

Right after his fall, a few neighbors brought meals for Vae and Lou, but those dwindled as they returned to their busy lives. They have a daughter in New Mexico, but she had enough to worry about as a mother of three. Vae could never burden her with their situation anyway. A neighbor mentioned a food kitchen several miles away, but Lou had been their sole driver since her sight deteriorated years ago. With his broken hip, they'd never be able to make the drive. She mulled over how to minimize their already rationed food.

Maybe she could manage on one meal a day. She was already down to two. As if on her cue, her stomach started to growl. Maybe she'd watch TV or clean the house again to distract her from the hunger and worry that seemed ready to consume her.

Too many seniors in our community face difficult decisions about whether to pay for prescriptions, utility bills or food. Many lack the transportation to access food banks or pantries that would allow them to receive the vital nutrition they need. The result: seniors suffer in silence, hesitant to burden a community they have served their entire lives.



Senior Face of Hunger:

The story of "Vae and Lou" represents the true daily lives of many seniors in our community.

Together, we can end chronic hunger for 33% of the most vulnerable households in our own community by 2016.

Long-Term Community Solutions

Ending hunger is possible. The good news - we live in a community where charitable individuals, faith-based organizations, non-profits and businesses already donate thousands of hours and dollars to help fight hunger.

We must leverage the community's existing talents and generous spirit to attract and align resources that are focused on a common plan to end chronic hunger.

The Plan

While we have a strong local food-banking network, it is stretched beyond capacity - unable to provide nutritious food or completely end hunger for our community's children, families and seniors. United Way and AAFB believe that by engaging diverse stakeholders throughout the county and building on existing strengths and resources, the necessary community-wide changes can happen to fulfill these unmet needs.

United Way and AAFB established a strategic partnership and worked with a variety of community members to develop a comprehensive four-year plan to **End Hunger in Maricopa County**.

Phase One of the plan takes place from July 2012 until June 2016 - with a priority on ending chronic hunger for those most in need.

The key is to reach each individual where they are living, end their chronic hunger and help them connect to services and opportunities for long-term self-sufficiency. Then we can channel those resources to help others in need.

The community's combined action will achieve powerful results for 27,000 households suffering chronic hunger in Maricopa County. The ripple effect will change individual lives:

Success in 2016

- An additional 17,000 children and youth will receive meals during or after school, or during the summer;
- 15,000 families with children and seniors will be connected to reliable food sources;
- Another 2,000 low-income pregnant women and 3,000 infant and pre-school-aged children will receive supplemental nutrition;
- 1,000 chronically hungry seniors and adults with disabilities will gain access to nutritious home-delivered meals; and
- People experiencing chronic hunger will be connected with resources to improve their self-sufficiency and put them on the path to financial stability.



The Everyday Face of Hunger

Meet Jen

Jen stared at her husband Mark's check in front of her. It was his last for who knows how long. Laid off from the company he'd diligently served for seven years, Mark was devastated and Jen was overwhelmed with worry.

Jen and Mark have been married for 10 years. Their home is always filled with the laughter of their three-year-old daughter and now they await the birth of their second child. A proud mom-to-be Jen continues to work hard to provide for her family. She adores her husband and daughter, and has always promised she would never let them down.

But now would she have to break that promise? She contemplated what bills she could skip this month to get the groceries they needed for the week. How long before the utility disconnect notices would come? Would she be able to provide for her new baby?

She thought of her daughter sleeping peacefully in her princess pajamas. She wished she could do the same, but her ever-increasing anxiety over how they would eat until her husband could find new work made it impossible for her to go to bed.

Many hardworking families in our community are barely getting by. When life-changing events, like a job loss hit, they are forced to make impossible decisions as they try to care for their families. No parent wants to admit they can't feed their own child, yet many families in Maricopa County are currently struggling with this harsh reality.

A Community Initiative

Critical to the plan's development, was the guidance from the 17-member volunteer-steering committee, chaired by Arizona Diamondbacks President and CEO Derrick Hall and co-chaired by retired APS executive Steve Wheeler, with input from business, government, non-profit and education executives.

The plan is rooted in a data-driven process, which assessed the level of "food security" of residents, existing emergency food system and resources, and developed an understanding of who faces chronic hunger issues.

Key Leaders Making It Happen

United Way and AAFB are leading many community stakeholders to implement this comprehensive plan to ensure that all people have food that is accessible and available to meet their basic health needs.

How will it happen? United Way will spearhead the implementation of Phase One of the plan. It will lead key initiatives and partner with other stakeholders with interest or resources to tackle other plan elements. Additionally, AAFB will utilize the plan's framework and convene partners in other regions to end hunger across the state. Both leaders will act as catalysts to motivate and inspire others to work together to meet the common goal of ending hunger in our communities. Ultimately, the plan's long-term success is dependent on additional partners, across our community, stepping up to fill a larger role and address ongoing needs.



Mom's Face of Hunger:

The story of "Jen" represents the true daily lives of many moms and families in our community.

To learn more visit
vsuw.org/hunger

UNITE to End Hunger

As with every community success, it will take the collective efforts of many different agencies, non-profits, businesses, the faith community and all of us to eradicate hunger. To that end, United Way calls the community to UNITE to End Hunger today by giving, advocating and volunteering. Individuals and organizations alike can end hunger by changing lives right here in our community and advancing systemic change around this critical issue.

Take the first step and join our Team to End Hunger in Maricopa County at vsuw.org/hungerteam. Just add your signature and commit to be a voice, spread the word and say you want to end hunger here in our community.

Give:

- Donate to United Way's work to end hunger at vsuw.org.
- Invite others to get involved in the work of United Way, our partners, and local food banks by giving of their time.

Advocate:

- Sign up to end hunger at vsuw.org/hungerteam and invite others to join the team.
- Share this information with your friends, family and coworkers to raise awareness about the unsettling state of hunger in Maricopa County.

Volunteer:

- Sign up to help at vsuw.org/projectconnect for United Way's Project Connect and connect our community's most vulnerable individuals with vital human services, including reliable food sources.
- Take the lead to collect snack pack items for Project Connect guests; email volunteer@vsuw.org for details.
- Volunteer at local food banks or community center dining halls.
- Volunteer and stuff WeekEND Hunger Backpacks at vsuw.org/backpack to help a child fight hunger and succeed in school.



To learn more visit
vsuw.org/hunger

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