



Pro Bono Q&A: Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona

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The Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona strives to serve 1.6 million Arizonans who do not have adequate access to food and often have to choose between food and housing, medical care or education. DLA Piper is proud to help support the food bank's efforts. Here, we talk with Laura Bird, Chief People & Culture Officer, about ways the pandemic has affected daily operations.

"The need for emergency food assistance in our community continues to grow, and food prices are on the rise. The greatest need right now is for financial support to keep our doors open for everyone in need."

Q: Tell us about your organization and the community you serve.

Laura Bird: The Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona responds to the root causes of hunger, and seeks to restore dignity, health, opportunity and hope to people living in poverty. Our mission is to change lives in the communities we serve by feeding the hungry today, and building a healthy, hunger-free tomorrow.

We serve five counties of southern Arizona, including rural and tribal lands where many families do not have ready access to fresh groceries. In Arizona, 1 in 4 children and 1 in 5 adults don't know where their next meal will come from.

In addition to providing emergency food assistance, our programs include farmers' markets, community farm plots and garden education, culinary job training, nutrition education, ready to eat meals, school pantries, programs for seniors, and

much more. Our five resource center locations across southern Arizona provide a place for community members to pick up groceries, connect with others, and access other services, such as assistance applying for SNAP benefits.

We partner with over 350 local nonprofits, libraries, schools, faith organizations, and other agencies to get healthy food and other services to the communities that need it most.

Q: How has the pandemic changed your daily operations?

Laura: We are seeing record numbers of families seeking emergency food assistance, many for the first time.

To keep our staff and community members safe, we have shifted all food distributions to a low-contact drive-through model, and we've changed our service hours and some locations to accommodate the increased need. We're grateful to have the National Guard working with us to ensure that families get the food they need.

Many of our other programs have adapted quickly to continue serving the community during the pandemic. Our Farmers' Market is also operating on a drive-through model to continue supporting local growers and getting fresh food to the community. Our school pantries remain open to families in need and are piloting innovative programs to get food to kids who are out of school. Our community farm is still growing food, and their educational workshops have gone virtual. Our community kitchen is preparing healthy, ready to eat Grab & Go meals for anyone in need.

We remain committed to serving the needs of our communities during a difficult time!

What is the greatest need right now, and how should people reach out if they want to help?

Laura: The need for emergency food assistance in our community continues to grow, and food prices are on the rise. The greatest need right now is for financial support to keep our doors open for everyone in need.

Unfortunately, we cannot currently accept volunteers or food donations, but we hope that changes soon! The best way to make a difference right now is to give online or encourage friends and family to give by hosting your own virtual food drive. Your financial gifts make an immediate difference in our community.

To make a gift online or learn more about setting up your own fundraiser, visit our website at www.communityfoodbank.org.