



# Community Stories

**2024**



### Dear Friends,

As I approach my six-year anniversary, the SFB-CRC continues to embark on a journey of growth and transformation. During the last 12 months, Project AZUL, our mobile classroom and service unit, expanded its reach, providing much-needed services and programs to rural communities. The Family Resource Center opened its doors, welcoming over 200 families into its nurturing environment. Saguaro Skills Center launched its first program and graduated the first cohort of IT students. Saguaro Skills Center is our state-

licensed vocational school where students can earn nationally recognized certificates. Our first three graduates secured well-deserved promotions or new employment with competitive starting salaries. In this year's report you will hear directly from some of the stakeholders of our many programs.

Through our partnerships, we continue to provide additional vital services to individuals and families, including free tax preparation, initial veterans' disability claims assistance, and resume help. As we look towards the future, our focus will shift towards a more targeted approach to our programs, aiming to create even more impactful experiences for our clients.

Despite the ongoing challenges of high demand for emergency food and rising food prices, my commitment to supporting those in need remains unwavering. Promoting healthy eating and alleviating poverty within our community remains our foremost priority. We implore our community members to join us in our endeavors, guaranteeing that no family suffers from hunger and that our work leaves a lasting, positive imprint on the lives we touch. Together, we can fashion a brighter future where every individual has access to the resources required to flourish.

Thank you for your invaluable support,

**Carlos Valles, MBA**  
Executive Director



The Family Resource Center helps maximize children's brain development during the first five years of life. Funded by First Things First through United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona, five Tucson-based nonprofits offer programs.

Meet a Family Resource Center mom:

### Nicole Merle

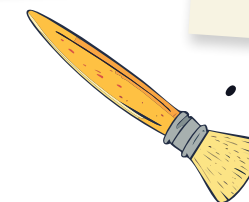
More than anything, I came to the Family Resource Center for my kids to interact with other kids and learn skills. It's awesome. At the beginning I thought I was coming just for my children, but now I feel part of something. Here I can learn and stop and rest and have time for me. I don't feel alone. I have told many others, and we feel like we are going through something together and have a safe space specifically for the littles.



Meet a Family Resource Center grandmother:

### Irma Mendoza

He estado viniendo al centro desde que abrió. Me gusta traer a mi nieto porque le gusta estar ahí. Me pregunta todos los días: "¿Está abierto el centro de familia?" El centro le ha ayudado mucho, mucho en su desarrollo. Disfruto las clases de arte y cuando juega nomás. El centro me ha ayudado a salir de casa y conocer. También ayuda a mi nieto a socializar con los demás. Le cuenta a su mamá lo que hizo en clase y su mamá todas las noches le lee los libros.



The Community Resource Center focuses on nutrition, family support, and workforce development. We offer classes such as cooking for diabetes, computer basics, and financial wellbeing as well as free tax preparation. SFB-CRC also offers some of these classes in the low-income communities of Summit and Arivaca through our rural outreach program, Project AZUL.

Meet a GED and English student:

# Gloria Amparo Rojo Esqueda

(translated from Spanish)

There are more job opportunities with the GED and I said, well, let's study. I was able to attend the Project AZUL classes in Summit. I've finished the course and now I can take the exam. I did a pre-test and did well. I'm also taking English and I've taken employment skills classes.

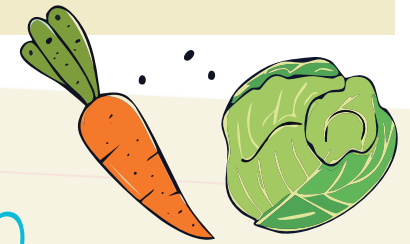
They tell me that they are going to bring more services here to my community in Summit. I want to be part of what they are going to bring. I am happy they bring these services to the community which has been a little forgotten for a long time.



Ron Bryant, a Veterans Service Officer, helps veterans apply for the Veterans Administration benefits they deserve and often didn't know about. Ron's reputation for success has brought more than 500 veterans for his help.

Meet a Veteran:

# Mike Jefferson



When I met Ron, I had no clue that I had VA benefits that were coming to me, I was just totally ignorant, like a lot of people are. I was just doing whatever I could do to get by. And if it wasn't for the food bank, I never would have met Ron. I was at the poverty level of Social Security. Now I have basically double my income, double. Wow.

I haven't been to the food bank since my benefit kicked down. Wow. Because, you know, I'm not a taker type person. I have to be hurting. I leave it on the table for others. But hey, if these guys weren't here, there would have been days when my stomach would have been touching my backbone, because when you're paying mortgage, you know it can be tough.



The food bank provides emergency food to an average of 450 households each week at our main location and to additional families at satellite pantries.

Meet a food bank neighbor:

# Gregorio Salazar



Yo vengo con mi familia, mi hermana. Siempre nos juntamos para economizar gasolina. Nos ayuda mucho esta ayuda que nos dan aquí de food bank. Y pues económicamente salimos adelante porque la vida está muy dura.

Yo hace un año o dos años me inscribí en un programa de computadoras aquí para aprender, para trabajar. Para estar más al tanto de lo que pasa adelante. Y los programas, aparte de las computadoras, hay otros que nos ofrecieron de cocina, de otro tipo de programas.

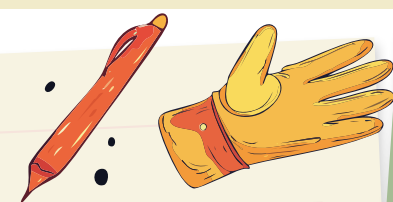
Gracias a todos los que elaboran aquí. Si no fuera por ustedes, quizás nos fuera mas mal a todos los pobres. Gracias. Muy amable.



The Saguaro Skills Center prepares students for certification exams leading to well-paid jobs in high-demand fields. Licensed by the State of Arizona, the center offers courses in welding and information technology, and we are planning additional certificate programs.

Meet a welding student:

# Isaiah Iguado



I came to the welding program because my father-in-law mentioned it and my granddad made a career out of it. I see the welding program as a career opportunity.

The class uses augmented reality to help prepare for live welding. It really helped as far as muscle memory. Knowing what to do, getting my angles right, speed, all of that really helped. That way when I got to the real deal...I wouldn't say it's a breeze...but I'm hitting the ground running.

I love the small class. A lot of attention to each student. I think it's helping us move along faster. The instructors are always pointing us in the right direction. Yeah, they're amazing.



Volunteers make Sahuarita Food Bank & Community Resource Center the wonderful place that it is. People come to SFB-CRC because our volunteers respect and care for them.

Meet a volunteer:

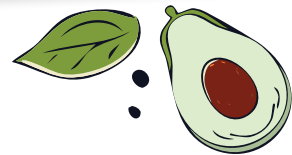
Mary LaFond

I needed something to do because I'm retired. I'm from a family of 10. My father was World War II, PTSD. I've got eight sisters, two brothers. I understand the dynamics of totally struggling parents.

I help lead the kitchen volunteer team sorting produce. Our belief is that if you wouldn't want it don't give it to others. People deserve better.

I also do the Sunday food rescue because like everybody else I'm concerned about the environment and concerned that food that can be used here is being thrown in the dumpster. Carlos told me to take ownership, so I talked to the Safeway manager and he's like, cool.

When I'm done here at the end of the day, I know I've made a difference in the life of somebody else, and I leave the world a better place because of it.



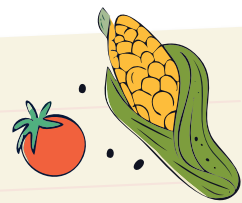
Sahuarita Food Bank welcomes student interns from San Miguel High School. This school in southern Tucson helps students from families with limited resources develop their full potential. Ninety-nine percent of San Miguel students go to college.

Meet an intern

Angel Peña

One thing that I like a lot is that there's a lot of stuff to do. When I was coming my junior year I would see the volunteers cared about the clients so much. And the clients were really, really, really grateful. My favorite things are helping out with clients, making food backpacks for kids and helping in the warehouse.

One of the main things I learned is taking the initiative. I used to be kind of like a shy person. I've learned how to go around asking if somebody needs help and asking what needs to be done. So that's something that I feel like I've really grown in.



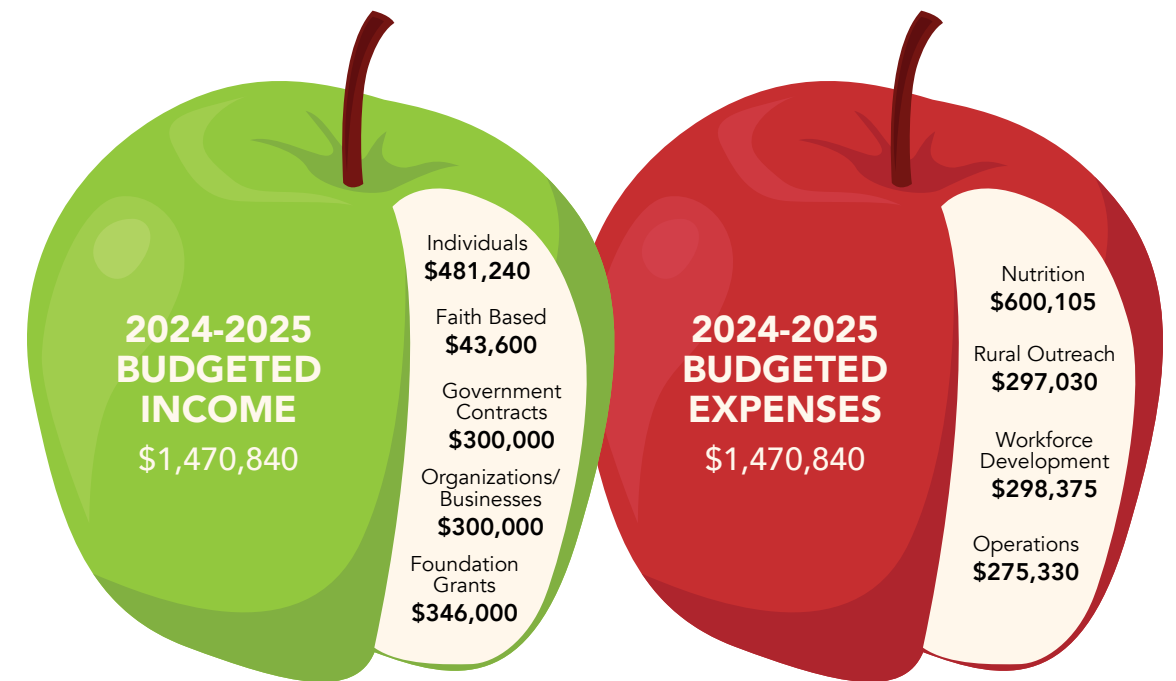
## Finances

Sahuarita Food Bank & Community Resource Center is a one-stop hub serving southeastern Arizona. SFB-CRC provides nutritious food, safety-net navigation, health and learning programs along with workforce development for individuals and families seeking to move to self-sufficiency. Your generous donations allow us to offer emergency food to increasing numbers of families during these difficult times.

Given the economy, the number of SFB-CRC participants has grown while non-profit donations have dipped. We urge your continued and increased support for SFB-CRC while we continue to manage inflation, grow our programs, and find new ways to meet the needs of our neighbors.

Donate at [www.sahuaritafoodbank.org](http://www.sahuaritafoodbank.org) or make checks payable to Sahuarita Food Bank and send to Sahuarita Food Bank, Box 968, Sahuarita, AZ 85629-0968. We encourage sustained, regular donations allowing us to have dependable funding year-round.

Arizona residents may contribute up to \$470 for an individual and \$938 for a couple to receive a tax credit for every penny on your AZ taxes.



1. More than 300 volunteers will have contributed 33,000 hours this year. That's the equivalent of 16 1/2 fulltime employees and valued at over \$1,100,000. (Independent Sector valuation)
2. In 2023-2024, we received donated food worth over \$2,300,000 from sources such as local stores, food drives, generous gardeners, warehouses in Tucson and Rio Rico, and federal government programs. (USDA valuation)



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Donate at [www.sahuaritafoodbank.org](http://www.sahuaritafoodbank.org) or make checks payable to Sahuarita Food Bank and send to Sahuarita Food Bank, Box 968, Sahuarita, AZ 85629-0968.

Donations to SFB-CRC, an independent 501(c)3 nonprofit, are deductible to the extent allowed by law. Arizona taxpayers may also be eligible for the dollar-for-dollar Qualifying Charitable Organization tax credit of up to \$938 if married filing jointly or \$470 filing individually. Use Form 321 and Code 22050.

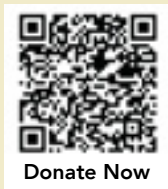
Your generosity makes all the difference.

### Contact Us

520-777-7675

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