



2831 N. 31st Avenue • Phoenix, AZ 85009 • (602) 352-3640 • Fax (602) 352-3659
www.FirstFoodBank.org

PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Kara Ritter Cell: 602-320-3679
kjritter@FirstFoodBank.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EXTRAORDINARY DEMAND FOR FOOD HITS ST. MARY'S FOOD BANK ALLIANCE

Community food demand jumps 64%; outstrips financial donations

Phoenix, Ariz. – Officials at St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance are reporting record-breaking requests for food from the community, as the economy continues to worsen. Generous financial donations over the holidays are being outstripped by a 64% increase in food demand throughout the state.

“As an organization, we have done a good job planning for the future and anticipated an ongoing and increasing need for food – but this year has brought us unforeseen conditions that have had a huge impact on our state, which is creating extraordinary demand for our services,” said Terry Shannon, President and CEO of St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance.

The nation's unemployment rate reached a 15-year high in November and is expected to rise in December when the government releases that report next week. Many economists believe the unemployment rate will keep climbing through 2009.

“Unemployment figures are a strong indication of the need for the Food Bank's services because folks get caught in that unemployment situation and then they need help getting food on the table,” Shannon said. “We anticipated a 10 to 12 percent increase in demand and planned accordingly – but the numbers we are seeing are five times that.”

Shannon said that normally the Food Bank creates a surplus of food and money this time of the year to last through the early winter, but to fill the community's needs, St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance will have to buy more food - and while the community continues to support the Food Bank and there was an increase in financial donations during the holidays, overall, financial support is not keeping pace with the skyrocketing demand for food.

The Food Bank distributed more than 50,000 Emergency Food Boxes in November and December - a 36% increase over last year. Overall, St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance distributed 10 million pounds of food out into the community in November and December, supplying about 200,000 meals every day.

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ABOUT THE FOOD BANK: St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance, the world's first food bank, is a non-sectarian, nonprofit organization that alleviates hunger by efficiently gathering and distributing food to 675 sites that serve the hungry. Serving 13 of Arizona's 15 counties, the organization is committed to volunteerism, building community relationships, and improving the quality of life for Arizonans in need. During Fiscal Year 2006-2007, the Food Bank distributed 51.5 million pounds of food to families and individuals, provided enough food for 200,000 meals every day, and garnered more than 230,000 volunteer service hours. Web site: www.FirstFoodBank.org Phone: 602-242-FOOD.