

# MY VIEW

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## Reader View: We've been around, but who knows us?

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By [Susan Odiseos](#) |  [0 comments](#)

Food for Santa Fe, the drive-through pantry that distributes up to 900 bags of groceries a week to needy families, couples and individuals, including seniors on fixed incomes, has been helping to alleviate hunger since 1979. But who knows us?

This all-volunteer organization is comprised of dedicated and caring people who have kept to the tasks of, first, filling bags of groceries with a dozen eggs, a 1-pound bag of pinto beans, rice or pasta, two large potatoes, two cans of vegetables, bread and, when available, fresh fruit or vegetables. Then the bags are distributed — no forms to fill out, no questions asked — from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. Thursdays, sooner if we run out.

Yet many longtime residents don't know of our existence or mistakenly assume we are the same or part of The Food Depot, the important local food bank that sells nonperishables at favorable bulk prices to organizations like us in Northern

New Mexico. They sometimes share “rescued produce” with us, which is always appreciated. But few know who we are or what we do. We hope that is about to change. First, here’s some background to ponder.

Those we serve include people who are unemployed, paid low wages, have experienced unexpected changes in their lives — health-wise and financially. They struggle to put food on the table, making difficult choices among paying rent, medical or utility bills, putting fuel in their vehicles or food, often low on the list. Single moms tell us they often forgo meals so their children can eat. One who came to us for the first time said she had been feeding her children oatmeal for three meals a day for five days and now nothing was left.

The consequences of insufficient nutritious food has long-lasting effects, inability to focus in school, and vulnerability to asthma, diabetes and obesity due to eating inexpensive foods with empty nutritional value. We give children two half-pints of milk and healthy snacks of cheese sticks, applesauce cups, small boxes of raisins or cereal, given to outstretched hands of youngsters still in pajamas or dressed for school. We don’t pretend to be solving the problems rooted in poverty, but we’re proud to be part of the solution, bridging the gap during difficult times. The smiles on the faces of children reaching for their items are reward enough for volunteers who begin serving in the cold, dark period before dawn.

Our mission will remain the same, but we’re changing our name to Feeding Santa Fe Inc. We’ll have a new look and plan to make ourselves better known. We’ll be expanding outreach efforts to areas including the south side, receiving referrals from pastors, teachers and social service agencies, attracting additional volunteers and having generous residents writing a check or including us on their lists at gift-giving time throughout the year — for holidays and occasions where a donation in lieu of a material gift will suit the giver and the recipient.

We’re grateful for our collaborations with Communities in Schools, Zona del Sol, Hutton Broadcasting, civic-minded businesses such as Smith’s on Pacheco, and local farmers sharing their produce. Faith communities and individuals contribute to the semi-annual Peanut Butter Caper, whereby 15- to 18-ounce jars replace items we purchase, relieving our modest budget. It’s all about raising awareness about hunger in our midst. We celebrate support for sustainability from individuals, the city of Santa Fe, foundations, the New Mexico State

Employee Charitable Campaign, faith and fraternal groups, etc. You are invited to join us in any way you can. Visit [foodforsantafe.org](http://foodforsantafe.org) or call 603-6600.

*Susan Odiseos lives in Santa Fe and serves as president of Food for Santa Fe.*