



# Fighting Hunger and Food Waste

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**1 in 5** people in Los Angeles County has trouble finding food, while perfectly good food goes to waste. Learn how the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank is battling both issues for a win-win.

# Feeding LA Together

The Los Angeles Regional Food Bank is using its food expertise to prevent perfectly good food from going to the landfill

BY MATT CRAGGS

Canned goods and other shelf-stable items may come to mind at the mention of “food banks,” but the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank doesn’t just accept food donations; they actively seek out ways to rescue as much healthy, fresh food as possible to fight hunger — and waste — in Los Angeles County.

That’s because within the county’s diverse population of 10 million people, 20 percent are experiencing food insecurity —

meaning they do not have consistent access to nutritious food (see page 6). That makes Los Angeles County one of the largest regions in the U.S. with a hunger problem, one that is spread across a diverse group of residents in age and ethnicity.

Thanks to its innovative approach to sourcing food, the Food Bank has been able to access a new supply of surplus food to further fill the county’s meal gap — food rescue.

How it works is simple: Food items are donated to the Food

Bank by local food sources and given to families facing food insecurity by the Food Bank’s agency network.

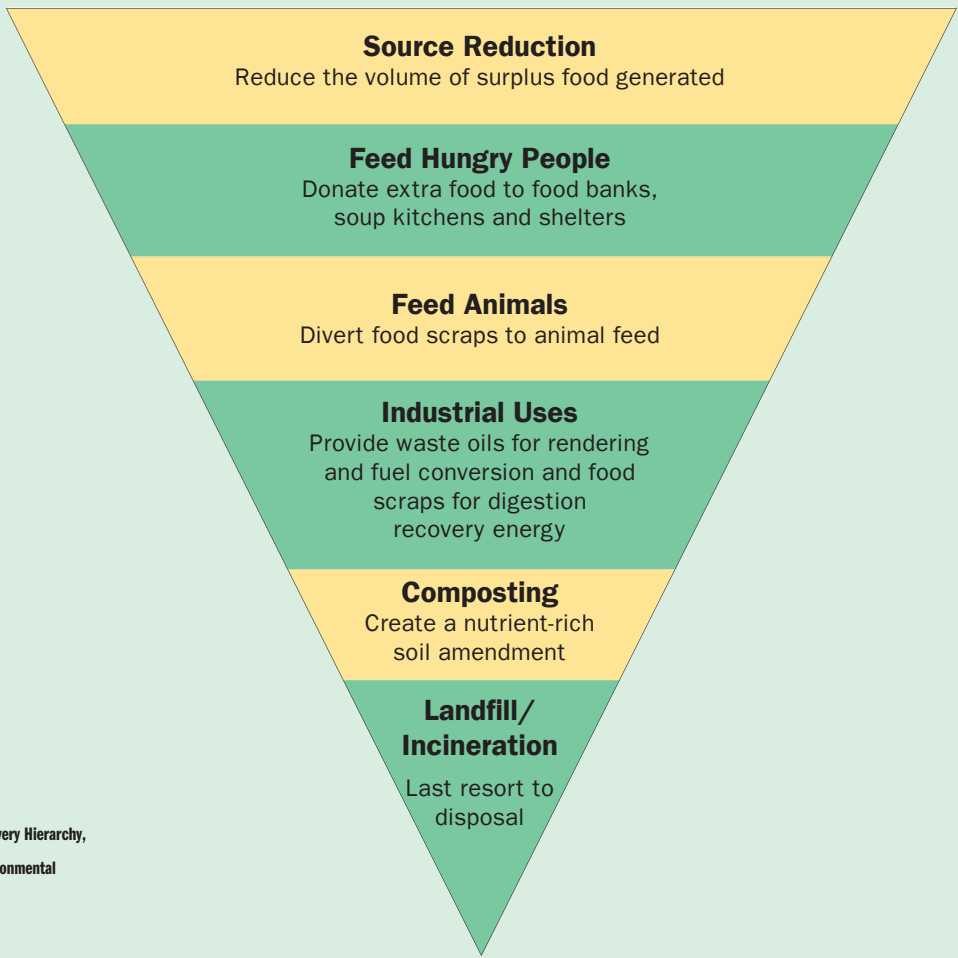
“Since 1973, the Food Bank has collected and distributed more than 1.4 billion pounds of food for members of our community,” said Michael Flood, president and CEO of the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank. “That’s well over 1 billion meals throughout LA County. In fact, we are on track to reach 1.2 billion meals before the end of 2019.”

For more than 45 years, the Food Bank has grown its partnerships to include grocery retail stores, nonprofits and



Fighting Hunger. Giving Hope.

## GETTING TO KNOW THE FOOD RESCUE PROCESS



Source: Food Recovery Hierarchy,  
United States Environmental  
Protection Agency

**“Since 1973, the Food Bank has collected and distributed more than 1.4 billion pounds of food for members of our community.”**

**Michael Flood**

President and CEO, Los Angeles Regional Food Bank

faith-based organizations. These partnerships have increased the efficiency of the Food Bank’s distribution methods while also growing its programs so more at-need residents — like seniors and children — can have access to both fresh food and nonperishable goods.

“Typically,” Flood said, “we are picking excess food up and then getting it out to a network of more than 600 agencies who distribute directly to those in need.”

Although the majority of its donations come from large organizations and stores, Flood notes residents can still make a huge difference in reducing the amount of food waste generated in the county by being mindful of how they purchase, consume and discard food — ensuring nothing goes to a landfill when it can go to a better use either as a healthy donated meal, clean energy or compost for tomorrow’s food (see the chart).

“There are people who we aren’t even reaching who need help,” Flood said. “We still have need in our communities.”



# Given Hope and Nutritious Food

## Putting food on the table for those who need it most

BY ANNE STOKES

**F**or most of her life, Melinda Glaum lived comfortably as a wife and mother of three — volunteering at her children's schools and donating to needy families in her community.

She never imagined being on the receiving end of such charitable efforts.

"I never thought it was going to be me," said Glaum. "I never thought about it until I was in that position."

Several years ago, her financial situation went from comfortable to dire when her marriage of more than three decades ended. In her 50s with little work experience, Glaum has had difficulties finding steady employment. She survives on alimony payments but because she doesn't qualify for public assistance, she still has trouble making ends meet.

"By the time I got done paying bills and rent, I had no money for food," she said. "[For instance,] right now, I have eight dollars and it still has to last me the rest of the month."

Glaum found help at Hope Chapel, an organization that partners with the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank to feed those in need. Off and on for the past four years, she's been able to stock her pantry with a variety of healthy foods when she needs them: produce, meat, dairy

and more. She calls it a "blessing."

"It's all nutritious," she said. "They give you pasta, they give you tomato sauce, they'll give you a bag of vegetables. If they have it, they'll give you eggs. Sometimes you'll get squash, onions and Brussels sprouts too."

If not for Hope Chapel and the Food Bank, Glaum said her finances would have limited her food options. As Glaum suffers from high blood pressure, it's critical she

eats healthy foods. The only foods she could afford on her own would be those with little nutritional value and high sodium content, which could severely impact her health.

"I would have probably bought a bunch of Cup Noodles or Top Ramen," she said.

While the help Glaum received has been lifesaving, she makes a point of seeking assistance as sparingly as possible to make sure there's enough food for others who may need it. The support she found through Hope Chapel has impacted her so much, she now encourages others who need help to reach out.

"A mother in my apartment [complex] told me about [Hope Chapel's work with the Food Bank] because she had to go there too, and she asked for a ride," Glaum said, emphasizing that it's okay to ask for help.

*If you need food assistance, visit [LAFoodBank.org/findfood](http://LAFoodBank.org/findfood) or dial 211.*

**"I never  
thought it was  
going to be me."**

**Melinda Glaum**  
Los Angeles County resident



Melinda Glaum doesn't have to worry about where to find her next meal because of support offered by Hope Chapel and the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank.

PHOTO BY DEE HUNTER

## WHERE FOOD GOES

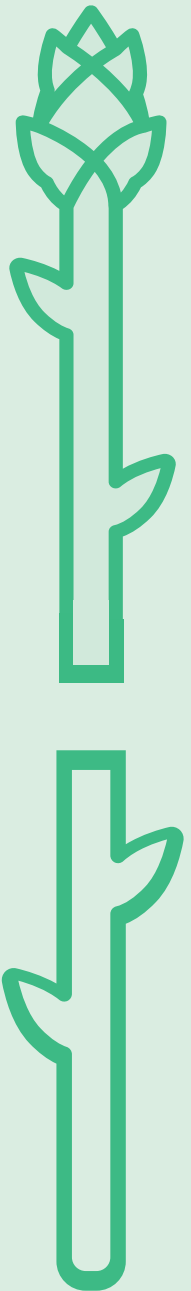
One third of California's food is wasted and becomes a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions when it could go to a better use. The Los Angeles Regional Food Bank helps divert perfectly good food from going to the landfill by redistributing it to those in need:

### Rescuing food

The Food Bank collects all edible food items that are not used by regional food sources and uses them to feed families in need. The Food Bank adheres to AIB food standards — products *have* to be safe to eat. The Food Bank is able to provide for 300,000 people each month through collection and distribution. Los Angeles County residents can boost this number with monetary donations. Because most of the food that is distributed by the Food Bank is donated by retailers, farmers and stores, each donated dollar stretches even further. In fact, each dollar donated provides up to four meals in food.

### Inedible food items

After edible food is identified, the Food Bank collects food items which cannot be eaten and does everything possible to rescue these still useful items from landfills. This food waste is either taken to a Los Angeles County facility to become animal feed, compost to grow new produce, or converted into biodiesel fuel — a renewable energy source — which is then sold to the Los Angeles Sanitation District to power local homes and businesses.



Curt Smith, refuse and recycling manager for Albertsons' Southern California Division, says that donating food to the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank makes good sense, both in business and the community.  
PHOTO BY BRIAN AVERILL

# Off the Shelf and **Onto the Table**

Everybody wins when stores keep food from going to waste

BY ANNE STOKES



**W**hen you walk into your local supermarket, you will find carefully stocked shelves and bins full of fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy and baked goods. But what happens to those items once their expiration date nears? Rather than throw perfectly good food away, retailers donate unsold food items to the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank and its network of partner agencies — ensuring any surplus food goes to better use.

“When our organization committed to zero hunger and zero waste, we knew we needed help,” said Amindra Wijay, food safety manager for Ralphs Grocery Company. “Our food rescue partners at LA Regional Food Bank have done an amazing job helping us on this journey. A decentralized network of local organizations picking up from our store locations more often was exactly the assistance we needed.”

Through the Food Bank, hundreds of retailers — including all Southern California locations of Albertsons and its Vons and Pavilions subsidiaries, as well as Ralphs and its Food 4 Less locations — help provide food for 300,000 people each month.

“Our donations go straight from stores and get into the hands of people who wouldn’t be able to afford to go into a market and buy all that food,” said Curt Smith, refuse and recycling manager for Albertsons’ Southern California Division. “Not only are donations helping to feed people, but stores are also helping the environment by not throwing that product away. It’s the best business value retail stores can make to

donate surplus food; it’s better than any recycling options.”

Rescuing surplus food by donating it to the Food Bank while it is still fresh can be more cost-effective than merely waiting to compost it. State regulations require businesses to recycle any excess food through composting or other programs. Donating food to the Food Bank fulfills this requirement for stores and also reduces the resource strain that tends to be associated with typical disposal. For instance, rather than paying hauling companies to pick up materials, the Food Bank accepts donations for free.

As a whole, Smith said the choice to donate food to the Food Bank comes down to good sense. “First of all, it makes business sense. Second, it makes human sense. Third, it makes environmental sense, and fourth, it’s the law,” Smith said. “I can tell you that there’s never a shortage of partners to pick up. The need is greater than the amount of product available. There are so many hungry people who need a good meal every day.”

**“It’s the best business value retail stores can make to donate surplus food.”**

**Curt Smith**

Refuse and recycling manager, Albertsons  
Southern California Division

## WHO IS HELPING

**Many** local retailers participate in the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank’s food diversion program. Nearly half of the Food Bank’s top 50 donors are produce donors. Partners include:

- Albertsons/Vons/Pavilions
- Aldi
- Amazon
- Big Lots!
- Costco Wholesale Company
- El Super
- Gelson’s Markets
- Kroger — Ralphs & Food 4 Less
- Panera Bakery Company
- Rite Aid
- Ranch 99 Market
- Sam’s Club Retail Company
- Smart & Final
- Sprouts Farmers Markets
- Starbucks Coffee Company
- Super King Markets
- Target Department Store Company
- Trader Joe’s Company
- Walmart Retail Company
- Whole Foods Market
- WinCo Foods
- 99 Cents Only Stores



# Facing Hunger Where it Hurts the Most

**Charitable agencies on the frontlines of hunger provide nutritious food for more people with the help of the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank**

**T**he Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation is one of more than 600 charitable partner agencies that receive food from the Food Bank.

“Working with the Food Bank is very enjoyable,” said Vera Yeh, program coordinator. “I feel so cheerful when I walk into the Food Bank warehouse. Everyone is so supportive.”

In 2016, the Foundation learned that someone had broken into a school in San Bernardino. “We thought maybe someone wanted the computers or something,” said Flora Yeh, volunteer coordinator. “But actually, it was the students from the school breaking into the cafeteria because they needed food. It was summer break, and the children were hungry. It made my heart really break. That’s why we started this program.”

Vera used to work as a nutritionist. Now she pours her passion into selecting the most nutritious items for distribution. The Foundation serves approximately 700 families every month with 25,000 pounds of food from the Food Bank that is supplemented with food from other sources. “We don’t just give out the food. We listen to their stories,” said Vera. “I know without the Food Bank, many people would suffer from malnutrition or other health issues.”

The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation has been partnering with the Food Bank since 2017, but they have been providing other services in Southern California since 1985. When they realized there was an urgent need for food assistance, they knew they had to get involved in hunger relief as soon as possible.

The Foundation’s four monthly distributions in Los Angeles County would not be possible without the Food Bank. They would also not be possible without volunteers. Each monthly distribution requires 60 to 70 volunteers to prepare and distribute the food. Families and individuals receive between 40 and 50 pounds of fresh produce, beans, grains, nuts, dried fruit and other healthy options. “The most rewarding part is to see the recipients and volunteers,” said Flora. “Healthy community, healthy families, healthy country. Everybody is happy.”

*Get involved at [LAFoodBank.org/volunteer](http://LAFoodBank.org/volunteer).*

The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation has partnered with the Food Bank since 2017.  
*PHOTO COURTESY OF LA REGIONAL FOOD BANK*



**“If we didn’t have a relationship with the Food Bank, we could not do this. A healthy community is very important to us.”**

**Flora Yeh**

Volunteer Coordinator, Charity Department,  
Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation

## RESCUING FOOD: BY THE NUMBERS

The Los Angeles Regional Food Bank is making a huge impact on feeding hungry families in the region while also reducing the amount of food wasted in Los Angeles County. See for yourself how it’s done!

**Each week, surplus food is rescued:**



**803,946**  
pounds of food are  
collected



**616,907**  
meals are  
distributed

**What happens to unusable food?**

The Food Bank has more than 30,000 volunteers each year who sort, glean and pack food. Any food that isn’t fit for consumption still goes to a better use by being turned into compost or biofuel. Each month, the Food Bank helps:



Convert more than  
68,000 pounds of food  
waste into biofuel



Turn 18,000 pounds  
of food product into  
animal feed



Prevent nearly  
835 metric tons  
of greenhouse gases  
from entering the  
atmosphere by keeping  
surplus food and food  
waste out of the landfill

## FOOD INSECURITY

### What is it?

Simply put, someone experiencing food insecurity has difficulty accessing healthy, nutritious foods on a consistent basis. This includes people who miss one or two meals a week, struggle when their paycheck or CalFresh benefits run out, or can only sustain themselves with inexpensive foods that have little or no nutritional value.

### Who does it impact?

Food insecurity affects all ages, ethnicities and geographic populations within Los Angeles County. However, those who experience food insecurity are more likely to have poor health and increased chronic health conditions. As seniors and children are regularly affected, the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank has developed programs to deliver nutritious foods directly to these at-risk populations.



### 1 in 5

people in Los Angeles County struggles with food insecurity. That's as many people that are affected across the state, as well.



### The employed

The majority of those served by the Food Bank come from working households.



### The high and rising cost

of living in LA County makes it difficult for families and individuals to make ends meet, even if one or two people in the household are working.

Learn more at [LAFoodBank.org/programs](https://LAFoodBank.org/programs).

# Don't Waste Our Planet

## How the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank protects the environment

BY THEA MARIE ROOD



To keep our environment healthy and green, Kimberly Ohrt at Waste Management knows that handling food waste correctly is critical to prevent more damage from being done.

PHOTO BY BRIAN AVERILL

**R**escuing food and reducing waste across Los Angeles County isn't just beneficial for feeding the hungry, it is critical to protecting the environment. That's why when food can't be given to those in need, the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank doesn't immediately toss it into the trash — it works with local waste agencies to convert it into renewable green energy.

"Wasted food is wasted energy," said Kimberly Ohrt, public affairs manager for Waste Management. "After getting food to those who need it, the Food Bank works with us to divert food waste from the waste stream to create green renewable energy."

Food that is simply thrown away wastes all the energy that went into growing or producing it, Ohrt explained. This includes limited resources like fossil fuels used in tractors and trucks, and large amounts of water — a particular concern in drought-ridden California. For example, tossing out one egg wastes 55 gallons of water, while a brown and mushy banana wastes 210 gallons. Cuts of red meat have the highest waste value: 1,850 gallons of water for one pound of hamburger.

In addition to wasting resources, uneaten food also actively harms the environment when sent to the landfill. When food breaks down, it releases methane — a gas 86 times more powerful than carbon dioxide and a significant cause behind global climate

change. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 20 percent of what goes into landfills is food waste.

Food waste can also obstruct the recycling process.

"It's what we call unintended consequences," said Ohrt. "Let's say you have a pizza box that you want to put in the recycling bin — which is a good thing — but there's a full slice of pizza still in the box. That contaminates all the good recyclables."

If recyclables contain too much contamination, like food waste, then manufacturers will not buy them — causing entire loads of otherwise recyclable materials to be sent to the landfill instead of being used again.

However, turning food waste into energy has nothing but positive returns for the environment.

For example, Food Bank volunteers separate out any food not fit for someone's table from the edible donations. Waste

Management converts some of that food waste into new energy using highly specialized equipment. This new end product, called Engineered BioSlurry, is transported to Los Angeles County Sanitation District's Carson facility to power the water pollution plant. Other inedible food items can become compost or animal feed.

"If we all make the effort to separate food waste at the source, we can put it to beneficial use instead," she said.

*Questioning if a food item is still safe to eat? Visit [LAFoodBank.org/shelflife](https://LAFoodBank.org/shelflife) for more information.*

**"Wasted food is wasted energy."**

**Kimberly Ohrt**  
Public affairs manager, Waste Management



# Be the Difference

## Q&A with the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank President and CEO Michael Flood

BY MATT CRAGGS

### Q: Who does the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank help?

**MF:** We serve children, seniors, working families and individuals across Los Angeles County. Almost 25 percent are children, roughly 12 percent are older adults and the rest are adults. Forty years ago, food insecurity was more of an inner city issue. In the last 15 to 20 years, unfortunately, this issue has spread throughout Los Angeles County.

### Q: What contributes to food insecurity in this region?

**MF:** It can be a lot of different issues — family breakups, health problems or losing a job. There are a lot of events in life that put people in a situation where they have trouble making ends meet, but the number one issue that keeps coming back is the high cost of housing.

**“For every dollar donated, we’re distributing the equivalent of four meals to the community.”**

**Michael Flood**  
President and CEO,  
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank

### Q: Why can buying food be such a struggle?

**MF:** The typical household needs to meet fixed expenses — including rent — first. Those are not negotiable. People have to ask themselves, “Do I pay my rent or buy food? Do I buy medication or food?” Unfortunately, food usually loses out. When you look at rent, it’s an uphill battle, especially for low income residents. We hear things like, “Last month, I was nine meals short for my family. Now, with a rent increase, I am 18 meals short.”

### Q: What role does nutrition play in food insecurity?

**MF:** A lot of individuals and families have to choose between calories and nutrients. They’re making the less expensive decision to get enough calories and sacrifice healthy, nutritious food. That’s become a bit more common. People with a limited budget are having to forego more nutrient-dense options because they’re more expensive. That can lead to malnourishment in extreme situations but also can contribute to diabetes, obesity and more serious health issues.

### Q: How are waste regulations helping?

**MF:** AB 1826 is a good example of policy that can come into play and have a positive effect. Retailers were already donating but this new legislation pushed everyone to look more closely [and ask if] they are donating everything.

### Q: What can residents do?

**MF:** They can join the fight against hunger by making a financial contribution. For every dollar donated, we’re distributing the equivalent of four meals to the community. They can also donate their time by volunteering at the Food Bank.

*Stand up to hunger and donate at [LAFoodBank.org/donate](https://www.LAFoodBank.org/donate).*



PHOTO BY BRIAN AVERILL

## HOW TO REDUCE WASTE AT HOME

- 1 Know what “expired” means.** Download the Shelf Life Guide from the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank at [LAFoodBank.org/shelflifeguide](https://www.LAFoodBank.org/shelflifeguide). Expiration dates state when food items will have the best quality, not when they stop being safe to eat. If an item isn’t spoiled but past its date, it can often still be eaten or donated. Inedible products are those with an “off” smell, texture, taste or other visible sign of spoilage.
- 2 Store foods properly.** Find storage tips at [LAFoodBank.org/shelflifeguide](https://www.LAFoodBank.org/shelflifeguide) or download the USDA’s free app, FoodKeeper, to maximize the shelf life of your food.
- 3 Shop your kitchen first.** When planning meals, work in your leftovers and any extra ingredients you’ve already purchased.
- 4 Plan for guests correctly.** Visit [savethefood.com/guestimator](https://www.savethefood.com/guestimator) to accurately gauge how much food to purchase when hosting holiday or dinner parties.
- 5 Get into composting.** Learn how to compost at home with free workshops and starter materials offered through Los Angeles County or LA Compost. Visit [smartgardening.com](https://www.smartgardening.com) or [lacompost.org](https://www.lacompost.org) for more information.

Source: Los Angeles County Food Redistribution Initiative





# Fight Hunger Today

Help the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank continue to fight hunger, give hope and prevent food waste by taking action now:



## Donate

The math is simple: The more donations the Food Bank receives, the more food it can distribute from local stores to organizations that give hungry families food in the region. Learn how your dollars can make a difference at [LAFoodBank.org/donate](https://LAFoodBank.org/donate).



## Volunteer

The Food Bank wouldn't be able to help the thousands of people it reaches each week without its volunteers. Find open opportunities at [LAFoodBank.org/volunteer](https://LAFoodBank.org/volunteer).



## Fundraise

Fighting hunger takes all of us coming together. Start a fundraiser on Facebook using [facebook.com/fund/lafoodbank/](https://facebook.com/fund/lafoodbank/) or start your own unique fundraiser at [LAFoodBank.org/wefeedla](https://LAFoodBank.org/wefeedla).



## Advocate

Help us advocate for policies that alleviate hunger. Stay connected with the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank by subscribing at [LAFoodBank.org/newsletter](https://LAFoodBank.org/newsletter).

LOS ANGELES REGIONAL

**FOOD  
BANK**

Fighting Hunger. Giving Hope.

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