

[Scottsdale](#)

Food banks see increase in demand

by **Kendall Wright** - Mar. 19, 2009 01:01 PM
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Foothills [Food Bank](#) of Cave Creek will celebrate its grand reopening Saturday at a larger facility that will allow it to accommodate its skyrocketing clientele.

The food bank, 6920 E. Cave Creek Road, realized a need for a larger home after officials saw that they were serving twice as many families as they were just six months ago. Last year, the food bank reported serving close to 75 families in a month; in the first two weeks of March it has served 90.

Executive director Pam DiPietro said that with the growing demand for assistance, the food bank has also been lucky enough to receive an outpouring of help from the community. In 2008, it took in 93,000 pounds of food and collected \$75,000 in donations in December alone. DiPietro said the donations will help the non-profit update its new facility and dole out more financial aid.

"All I can say is that when you ask, God provides," DiPietro said. "What we received in December through food and monetary donations I would say is comparable to the 11 months prior. I was just so grateful and overwhelmed."

Although Foothills Food Bank has had enormous success so far this year, other food banks around the Valley are finding it increasingly more difficult to keep up with the demand for help.

It's a story that has been repeated at two food banks in Phoenix as well.

"We are certainly struggling right now," said Zarinah Awad, executive director of the Cultural Cup Food Bank, 537 E. Osborn Road. "We have recession lines in front of the food bank, and almost every day we run out of food because of the demand. Since the economy is so bad right now, we need more donations because people are in greater need of our help than ever before."

St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance, which has multiple locations and works with more than 534 partner agencies, has seen a record jump in demand. The food bank reports a 90 percent increase in demand from February 2008 to February 2009 - already projecting to serve 6.7 million meals by the end of this year, according to Beverly Damore, the alliance's director of community relations.

"Lately it's not uncommon for us to see people who used to make the donations and now need them for themselves," Damore said. "We're not going to let anyone go hungry if they need the help."

Food banks are not just for the homeless.

After her husband lost his job, Angela Wilson of Phoenix relied on the food she received from the Cultural Cup to feed her family for eight months. As a professional social worker, she said, she was faced with a tough situation before she found the food bank because she earned just enough to pay her bills but too much to receive help.

"When I needed help, they didn't put (me) through all the red tape," Wilson said. "You don't know how relieved I was when I didn't have to prove I was poor enough. They just told me to come in and they would find some way to help me and my family."