



**Dear BAJA Members,**

BAJA has sponsored food drives for the Green Valley Food Bank for many years. We do holiday drives, an annual drive for the past 3 years during league softball, and occasionally do other drives when there are specific needs. Some BAJA members have asked questions about how the Food Bank system works, so we are sharing this information on the Food Bank's operation and how donations are utilized.

The Green Valley Food Bank is a part of the Arizona Community Food Banks network with the main office located in Tucson. The Tucson agency supports the food banks in Tucson, Sahuarita, Green Valley, Amado and Nogales. Each of the food banks are separate entities other than Green Valley and Amado which work closely together and often share resources and employees.

The primary source for food staples to the Green Valley food banks is the government. The Tucson agency receives government supplied staples and allots them to each location which is responsible for picking up their allotment. The locations never know what type or how much food they will receive. Usually, however, it is in the form of canned goods, some type of rice or pasta, milk and eggs. Occasionally, some type of soup, canned meats, one type of canned fruit and cereal may be included or substituted. Often, the individual food banks will run out of some these staples before the next shipment arrives. Then, they rely on the goodwill of the communities to supplement these items.

The government does not supply peanut butter (a huge source of protein for most kids), bread products, canned beans, most soups, usually canned meats, produce, fresh meat, condiments, baking or cooking items (i.e. Pasta sauce, ketchup, mustard, sugar, flour, salt, etc.) crackers, personal care or household items or paper products. Again, the food banks rely on donations for most of these products. The local grocery stores all donate their close to past dated bread and pastry items, meats, fish and fruits and vegetables. All donated items are called "bonus" items as they are the items given out over and above the government issue.

The majority of the help at the food banks is volunteer workers who serve as greeters, shoppers (helping clients "shop" the shelves and making sure they only take what they are allowed), sorters/stockers, truck drivers, warehouse workers, etc. Volunteers are always needed - especially in the summer months when the snowbird volunteers leave, and year-round help go on vacations from the heat! You can volunteer for as little as one-half day per week or as many days as you like Monday through Friday.

Food Bank clients from Tucson and the other 4 locations (Sahuarita, Green Valley, Amado and Nogales) can visit any of the locations only a combined total of twice per month. All clients from these areas are listed on a shared database and are recorded each time they visit a location so they cannot exceed their 2 monthly visits. Only one member per household can register that household and identities are checked by the greeters to make sure only registered clients can shop. At registration, the number of family members living in the household is verified and entered into the database and the greeters then give the client a card they give the shopper which shows the amount from each shelf the client is allowed because of the family size.



## HOW OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY FOOD BANK WORKS

The Green Valley Food Bank serves a large population of the elderly clientele as well as families from the area. It is the most popular of the 4 food banks outside of Tucson due to letting the clientele actually "shop" the shelves rather than just being given a bag of groceries randomly selected by a volunteer. Our Food Bank can easily serve over 100 clients on any given day. That is why the need is so great here. It is extremely difficult to keep the shelves full and nigh impossible without the help of community food drives and private donations.

Hopefully, this gives you all a little better understanding of how the Food Bank operates. I would encourage BAJA club members to stop by the Food Bank during open hours and see the need and the hard work of the volunteers trying to meet that need!

Thank you for all the support you have given our food drives over the years. You have always been amazing, and the Food Bank most definitely knows who and what BAJA is. They always get very excited when they hear we are doing another drive to help support them. Let's fill those shelves with peanut butter to last for a few months and do our part in helping feed our hungry young and older local area population.

Again, thanks a hundred times over! You are the BEST!

Sandy Michaels