
Centering Lived Experience for Effective Advocacy

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Community Advocates: Bryan Espinoza, Jenny Berten

Agenda

Session Overview

- . Brief Presentation
 - . Food Bank 101
 - . What is Advocacy
 - . Finding your “why”
 - . Community Advocates
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Food Bank Background

- **Service Area**
 - The Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano County primarily serves Contra Costa and Solano counties
 - We also provide support to 16 additional Northern California counties through our Feeding America affiliation



Food Bank of CCS

- Operating since 1975
- Stores and distributes donated and purchased perishable and non-perishable food directly to members at community sites and through our agencies
- 8,000 volunteers/monthly, 120+ staff, truck fleet, and two warehouses over 144,000 sq. feet
- For every \$1 donated, the FBCCS provides enough food for two meals



Food Bank of CCS

- Offer programs 7 days a week
- Partner with 260+ non-profit agencies
- Distributed over 60 million pounds of food in FY21
- Coordinate over 100k volunteer hours/year
- Serve 1/4 residents
 - 1/4 recipients are children



What is Advocacy?

Defining “advocacy”:

- Activity by a group or person that aims to influence a decision
- Public support for a recommendation for an issue
- Increase awareness on the topic

What does it mean to be an Advocate?

- As an advocate **YOU** have the ability to be the voice for those who don't feel they are being heard and ensure they are being respected.

All of us in this group are working on being advocates for ourselves, one another and all of those in our community without a voice.



Examples of Advocacy

- Engage with elected officials and advocate for anti-hunger policies
 - Lobby Days, Hills Visits, Updates, etc.
- Letters of support
- Town halls
- Coalition building and strong partnerships



Find your “Why”!

[Simon Sinek Video](#)



Example of WHY Statement



"I am a Hunger Fighter because WIC allowed my Mom to focus on her pregnancy, which gave me a strong start in life. I believe that every child deserves a healthy beginning."

Cassidie Carmen Bates
Policy and Advocacy
Manager Food Bank
of Contra Costa and Solano

Our Advocacy Goal

*Our Advocacy Goal is to identify the **root causes** of hunger, specific to our **region** while integrating the experiences and voices of our **community members** to most effectively advocate for **sustainable change** in our food systems to eliminate food insecurity*

Advocacy Team Logistics & Programs

- **Advocacy Team**
 - Team History
 - Organizational Structure
 - Focus within our org & role of Advocacy
 - i. Relationship with elected officials/lobbying
 - ii. Legislative agenda
 - iii. Community relationships
- **Community-Based Advocacy Programs**
 - Speaker Series
 - Community Advocacy Program (CAP)



Speaker Series

- **Our annual Advocacy training program**
 - For community members with lived experience and those passionate about ending hunger
 - This program aims to amplify the voices of those impacted by food insecurity and provide the tools to effectively advocate
 - Identification of 'WHY', legislative process, public speaking best practices



Community Advocacy Partnership

- Our Speaker Series graduates are invited to join this partnership
- CAP members help us to advance the Food Banks' mission of fighting hunger through the legislative process
- Ongoing opportunities
 - I.e., creation of annual legislative agenda
- Professional Development



CAP Objective

CAP allows our advocacy efforts to be intentional and inclusive of the qualitative aspects of our anti-hunger agenda. CAP makes our organization stronger and more diverse, and, therefore, better positioned to serve everyone in our community.

Examples of CAP Opportunities

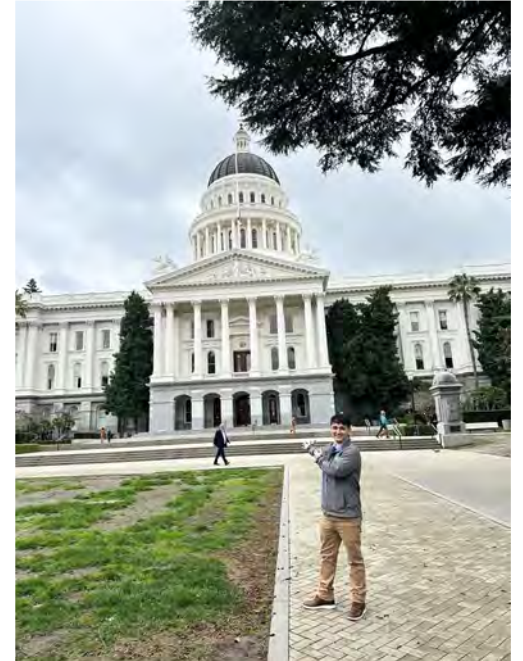
- Meetings with Elected Officials
 - Elected officials and their staffs enjoy meeting with constituents who are volunteer advocates
 - Personal stories put a face to data, statistics, and policy
 - Benefit of virtual vs in person
 - Engaging with Legislation of local, state, and national levels
 - County Partnerships & Workgroups
 - Research on Root Causes
 - Education of food insecurity and advocacy
 - Informing FBCCS Policy Agenda
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Hearing from our Community Advocates

Bryan Espinoza

Bryan is a Hunger Fighter at the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano. He is a CalFresh Outreach Program Coordinator who assists individuals and families through the application process for the EBT card while providing additional resources. Bryan also has experience as a Street Outreach Coordinator in Livermore (2021-2022), delivering hot and ready meals, hygiene kits, and donated clothes to unhoused populations.

Bryan's passion for ending hunger stems from his time as a college student at UC Irvine with a low food budget of \$40 per week. He had no idea about programs such as CalFresh at the time, which he would have been eligible for. Bryan is dedicated to making CalFresh and other resources known to our neighbors in need while also fighting for easier access to food in unhoused communities.



Hearing from our Community Advocates

Jenny Berten

Jenny is a Food Bank 2021 Speaker Series graduate, Community Advocacy Partner, and Board Member who welcomes opportunities to advocate for college hunger and food as medicine. Jenny is a Nurse at Saint Mary's College of California, where she sees firsthand how food insecurity negatively impacts a student's physical health and academic abilities. Jenny initiated USDA food insecurity screening at her college because she believes students can only reach their academic potential when they have reliable access to healthy food.

Jenny has served as a panelist at the California Association of Food Banks and Feeding America conferences, where she detailed her Speaker Series experience. Jenny has advocated for 2023 Farm Bill priorities with her elected officials in Washington DC and for the Food Bank's legislative State priorities in Sacramento during Hunger Action Week. Jenny is honored to be a recipient of the 2023 California Hunger Action Coalition Hunger Fighter Award.

