

Hunger in New Mexico

2014

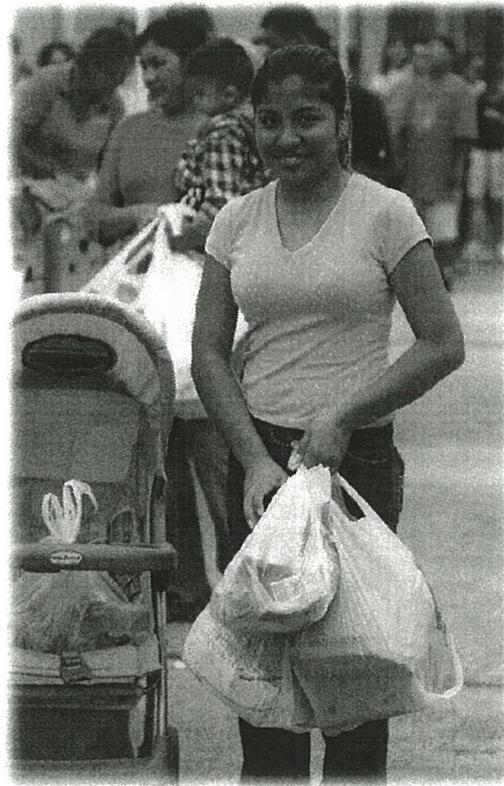


SNAP (food stamp) Benefits

- 57% of families helped by New Mexico food banks report receiving SNAP benefits



Meet Maria



At one time Maria was a single mother.

She escaped a domestic violence situation with her two children who were both toddlers at the time.

When she fled, it left her financially devastated. It took years to get back on her feet.

She used SNAP to help feed her and her children. Without it, she wouldn't have been able to give them fruits, vegetables or meats because they were just too expensive to buy on her own.

She said, "It was nice to have food stamps because I had the flexibility to choose foods my kids liked to eat. And, I knew what I could prepare at home with my SNAP benefits would be meals that were nutritious."

Maria had SNAP benefits for about seven years.

She said, "It took me that long to come back from such an emotional and financially devastating time."

But, as cuts kept happening to the SNAP program, and, as Maria secured more consistent employment, her benefits whittled away to hardly anything.

Even though she had secured a job, she was still struggling.

Food stamps were no longer supplying enough help to feed and sustain her kids. Maria tells us that her benefits went from \$423 a month when she didn't yet have employment to \$98 once she found a decent paying job.

At \$98 a month and with a full time job and salary, it wasn't enough.

She had to seek help from places Roadrunner Food Bank supplied food to.

She attended a food pantry on Albuquerque's Westside.

Maria recounted to us how hard it was to put her embarrassment aside to wait in the pantry line with her two little children. And in her own words, "I did it for them."

Today, Maria and her family are in a much better place.

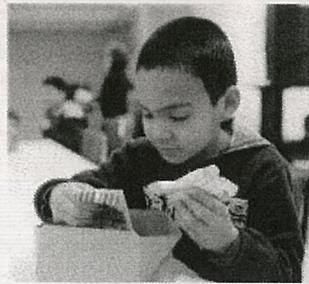
She and her kids are safe and have enough food throughout the month.

Maria and her new husband live together. With his added salary, they no longer need SNAP benefits or help from charitable hunger-relief organizations.



Employment

- 53% of hungry households have a member who has worked in the past 12 months



Meet Leslie



Leslie's husband works full time at a casino, and his salary isn't enough to get by. There are four of them and with two little kids, food goes quickly.

Leslie told us, "I make sure my kids eat before me and my husband."

She stays at home with her baby and three-year-old child, and if she did work, she said her entire salary would go to day care.

So, to help supplement what they can afford to buy at the grocery store, she makes sure they attend a monthly food distribution in Bosque Farms.

Leslie said, "I come to this distribution to be sure we have enough food to last the entire month. Spend a week in my shoes trying to figure out how to make it all work. It's tough sometimes."



Housing Situation

- 89% of families helped with food have permanent housing, such as a home or an apartment



Meet Carmen



Carmen is a senior who struggles to afford her rent, but she manages to keep her place.

She was married for 35 years and she worked since she was 11 delivering newspapers.

When her husband died there wasn't much money to last during her retirement years.

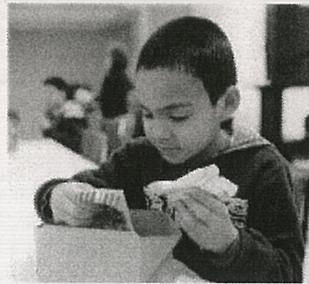
Right now, Carmen lives in her rental with three grandchildren. They are all under 6 and since she is raising them, two generations are experiencing poverty and hunger.

Carmen receives help with food from a church partner in the International District. She said, "Places like this help us. At least we are eating and we're surviving in this world. Times are hard, but we just get by."

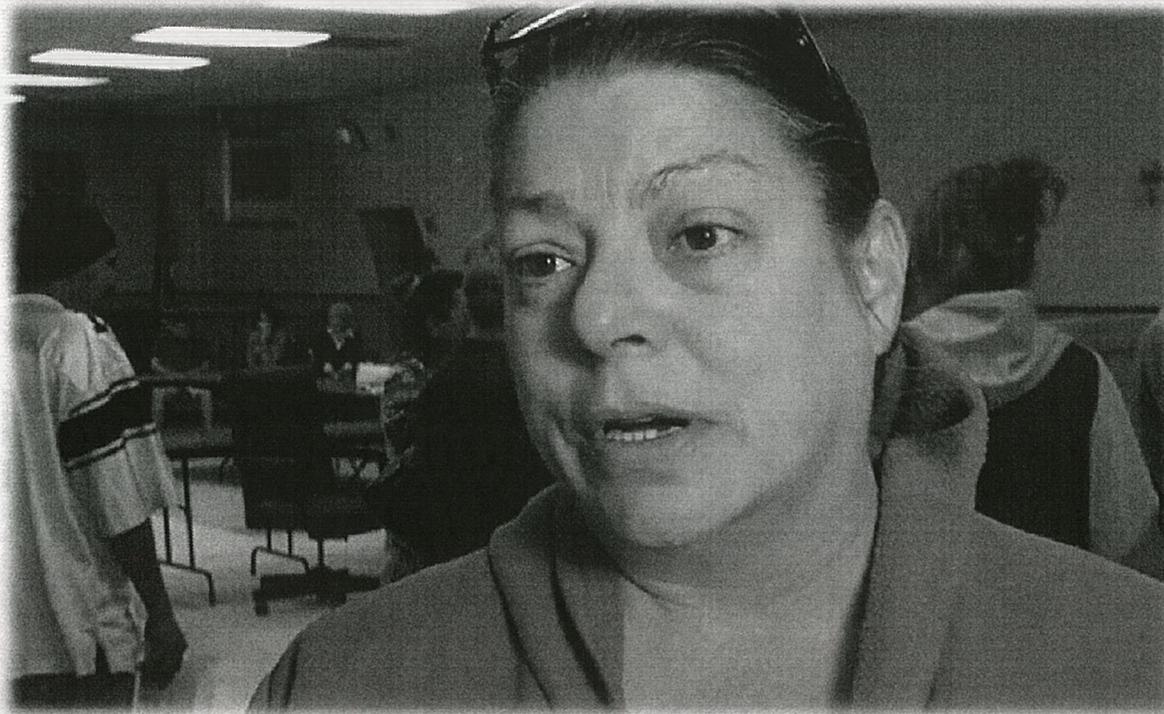


Health

- 59% have chosen between paying for medicine or medical care over food at least once in the past 12 months



Meet Dorothy



Dorothy lost her job and shortly after was in a severe car accident. She couldn't work because of the time she needed to heal and recuperate.

With no income and mounting debt from medical care, she fell behind.

She said, "I don't know which choice to make. Do I choose between paying for my medicine, electricity or gas to put in my car?"

She continues on to say, "Right now, I'm temporarily impaired and in a bad spot. When I can stop for just a minute and can get any kind of help, it is really fantastic. For that minute, that day, I can breathe a little easier."

Dorothy attends one of our church partner sites in the south valley to help her with food.

She hopes it is only temporary.

Once she has been released from a doctor's care, she hopes to find work again.

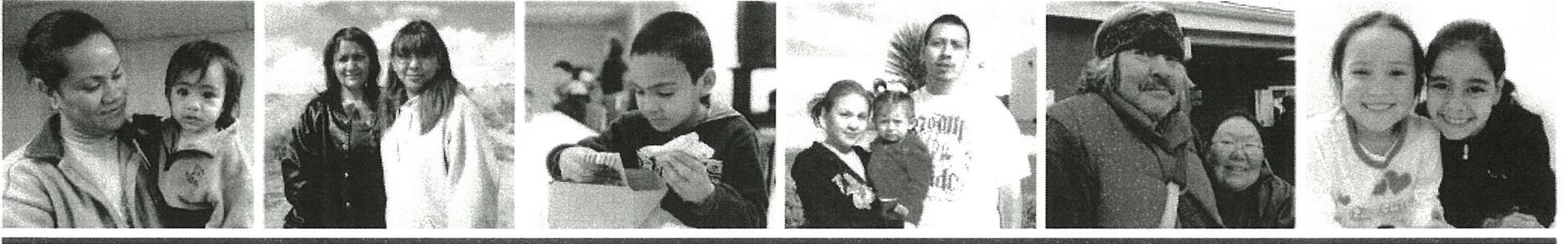
She said of the food she receives, "I'm just so thankful for anything I get. It's hard knowing I didn't provide this food and I'm still embarrassed to come here for help, but when a child is involved, you don't have a choice.

You put your pride in your pocket."



Seniors

- 21% of hungry people helped by New Mexico food banks are seniors



Meet Joan



Joan worked her entire life. She is a retired janitor from APS. Most months her retirement and social security aren't enough to last.

She doesn't go on vacation — ever.

Joan said she'll never be able to afford it.

She lives on the Pajarito Mesa and owns her own home, but said it is still difficult to make it every month.

She worries a lot.

How will she buy her high blood pressure medication and food in the same month?

Sometimes she skips buying her medication to eat.

Sometimes she skips eating to buy her medication.

Often, she must go to a monthly mobile food pantry distribution for help with food.

She doesn't have access to regular utilities either.

She and her neighbor (also a senior) haul water in to drink and bathe.

Refrigeration is a problem too.

When she can afford to buy propane, she can 'power up' her small refrigerator for "goodies" like strawberries and chicken.

Yes, she defines goodies as strawberries and chicken. She can't afford to buy those on her own.