



**St. Mary's
Food Bank**
ALLIANCE

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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ST. MARY'S FOOD BANK ALLIANCE RECEIVES GRANT FOR ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAM

Through Training and Coaching, Community Kitchen Offers Hope

Phoenix, AZ – The Community Kitchen program is the first St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance program to directly address the problem of poverty in Arizona by working to break the cycle. The 16-week program trains low-income adults for employment in the food service industry. In addition to culinary instruction, students receive life skills coaching.

"I am grateful to the Community Kitchen," says graduate Shyrlee Rogers. "They helped me with their support and helped me get a job with benefits and also helped find a place to live, and I'm still here. And I'm very grateful. I'm doing really well."

To support the America's Second Harvest and Sodexo Community Kitchen Capacity Building Program, Sodexo has awarded a \$20,000 grant to the Food Bank. Funds from the grant will be used to provide Advanced Culinary Certification (ACC) classes twice this year and a student Stipend Program. ACC classes are provided for advanced students within the program and as continuing education for past graduates. The student Stipend Program will help Community Kitchen students as they face unique challenges, including financial issues, family conflict and barriers to employment. Barriers to employment include living in unstable housing, involvement in a dysfunctional relationship or being unable to secure affordable child care.

“I have a new respect for the working poor,” says Community Kitchen manager Kate Thoene. “Everything is harder for them, like running errands, catching a bus, finding affordable child and health care. I’ve become really aware of that because of working in this program.”

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For statistics on poverty and hunger, media inquiries, photos or interview requests, please contact Melody Kelly at (602) 343-3160, (602) 621-0526 or mlkelly@firstfoodbank.org.

St. Mary’s Food Bank Alliance, the world’s first food bank, is a non-sectarian, nonprofit organization that alleviates hunger by efficiently gathering and distributing food to 675 sites that serve the hungry. Serving 13 of Arizona’s 15 counties, the organization is committed to volunteerism, building community relationships, and improving the quality of life for Arizonans in need. During Fiscal Year 2006-2007, the Food Bank distributed 51.5 million pounds of food to families and individuals, provided enough food for 200,000 meals every day, and garnered more than 230,000 volunteer service hours. Web site: www.FirstFoodBank.org, Phone: 602-352-3640.