



**NEW MEXICO FIRST**  
*People. Ideas. Progress.*

## **New Mexico First and Project SHARE NM Newsletter**

Stay Informed and Engaged

August 31, 2020

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### **Census 2020 Countdown**

Only 30 days are left to be counted in the 2020 Census! As of today, only 55% of NM households have completed the Census. Missing just 1% of New Mexicans means the loss of \$780 million dollars over the next 10 years. [Check response rates](#) for your city, county, congressional district, or tribal area.

Here's what you can do to help:

- Make sure your family, friends and colleagues have responded to the Census. [Get started here.](#)
- Include a census slide during your next meeting or presentation.
- Add Census information to your email signature
- Participate in #CensusMondays on social media platforms.



## September: Hunger Action Month.

This September, people all over New Mexico and the nation will be taking a stand against hunger. Here are some actions you can take.



### [Donate](#)

Feed four hungry people for every dollar you give



### [Advocate](#)

Contact your state legislator. Spread the word about efforts to end hunger.



### [Volunteer](#)

Donate your time to help stretch donation dollars.

Take the [“30 ways in 30 days” challenge](#). Download and share this calendar to find an action for each day during September.

A monetary gift, at any level, allows food banks to: buy in bulk from established partners at a deep discount, stretching every dollar most effectively; purchase the food items that are most necessary; and use the funding to expand distribution capacity by accessing more trucks and drives, as well as boxes, bags and safety items.

Find a food pantry or meal site near you by adding your location to [this search](#).

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New Mexico has a high rate of hunger yet few resources for food to meet the high demand for emergency food assistance. According to the [2019 Map the Meal Gap](#) study, approximately 320,000 thousand people in New Mexico are food insecure and more than one-third of those who are food insecure are children. These numbers are [estimated to have increased](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the same time, [it's estimated](#) that 30-40% of the food supply in the United

States is wasted each year, including approximately 20 billion pounds of fruits and vegetables that are left in fields and plowed under often because they don't meet aesthetic standards for commercial sale. [Gleaning](#) is an age-old response to hunger, where gleaners gather up the unharvested produce and use this bounty for local food consumption.

In the 2020 legislative session, Senator Nancy Rodriguez sponsored [Senate Memorial 3](#), which established the NM Gleaning Work Group to identify food that may be going to waste – perfectly good food – and get it to people in need. The group is also looking at identifying or developing new markets for NM farmers and addressing barriers to accessing the food, such as liability issues for the farmers, labor to glean the produce, and transportation.

**The Work Group needs your help.** The group is looking to farmers, ranchers, producers and others working in the food supply chain to complete a survey addressing such questions as: *What should a gleaning program look like in New Mexico? Have you ever gleaned unharvested produce before? Do you know producers who are interested in gleaning? Are you a producer who has surplus produce but has difficulty donating it? How can gleaning help your community?*

Complete the [Gleaning Work Group Survey](#) here. Questions? Contact Matthew Gaskins, NM Dept. of Agriculture, [mgaskins@nmda.nmsu.edu](mailto:mgaskins@nmda.nmsu.edu).

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## Connecting Local Food Producers and Consumers

New Mexico is not doing as much as it can to keep our agricultural outputs here in the state. According to [NM State University](#), almost all (97%) of New Mexico's agricultural products leave the state, then we turn around and import more than \$4 billion in food products annually.

In 2010, over \$13 million in New Mexico agricultural products were sold directly to consumers via farmers' markets and other venues. According to NMDA (2010), if New Mexico consumers increased their purchases of food from local farmers and ranchers by 15%, over \$375 million in direct farm income and \$725 million per year in associated spending would add to the wealth of our communities. And, as "health is wealth," these local links between producers and consumers can expand access to healthy, farm-fresh, local produce to more New Mexicans.

[The Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy Work Group](#) was launched in 2019 by Representative Melanie Stansbury and organized and staffed by New Mexico First to help coordinate a cross-sector response to eradicating hunger and

promoting resiliency in New Mexico's agriculture. The bipartisan group of legislators, emergency food sector, farmers, ranchers, resilient agriculture advocates, faith communities, anti-hunger and anti-poverty advocates, human rights advocates, health providers and advocates, local food system advocates, researchers, philanthropy, and more joined together to collect and analyze data, coordinate policy efforts and put forward a bipartisan policy agenda. Action Teams are organized around communication, funding and philanthropy, food systems, and policy and advocacy and are currently focused on emergency responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you would like to help the COVID-19 food and water emergency efforts by joining any action team, please email Melanie Eastwood at [melanie@nmfirst.org](mailto:melanie@nmfirst.org).

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## Student Hunger

**K-12 Students.** Making sure that K-12 students have access to nutritious food has been a challenge, as schools and school cafeterias have closed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The [NM Out-of-School-Time Network](#) has an updated list of [food options for each school district](#).

In July, the Human Services Dept. issued [special P-EBT cards](#) for eligible households with school-aged children. [NM Appleseed](#) reports that 25% of the P-EBT cards issued have not been activated. This is approximately 33,000 households. Each household is issued one card for all eligible children with \$399 in funds for each child. If all households used their full allocation, we would have over \$13 million dollars available to help families purchase food right now.

There is a chance P-EBT will be extended into the fall, and it is critical that eligible

families learn about this benefit. [Find more information](#) and feel free to reach out to NM Appleseed with questions or for help in claiming and using these funds. Email [Jenny Ramo](#) or [Daniel Valverde](#).

**College Students.** Some people may think of college students as living in a protected bubble, with housing in dorms and meals in the cafeteria. In fact, [a 2018 survey](#) of 86,000 students at 123 two-four-year institutions found 45% of students were food insecure in the prior 30 days; 56% were housing insecure in the previous year; and 17% were homeless at some time during the previous year. There is every indication that insecurity rates are higher now, with many college and university campuses closing down because of COVID-19.

The UNM Basic Needs Research Project aims to improve the basic needs security of college and university students in New Mexico through a combination of data collection and research to developing advocacy strategies for solutions. The focus in 2020 is on students at UNM, but the project anticipates expanding beyond UNM in the next phase of the project. The first survey results will be available in early September. If you have any questions or comments, feel free to write the Project Director, Sarita Cargas, D.Phil, at [cargas@unm.edu](mailto:cargas@unm.edu).

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## Election Countdown



### Additional Notes:

- Absentee Ballots are now available to New Mexicans, for application. [Apply for your Absentee Ballot](#), online, at the New Mexico Secretary of State: Voter Services website.
  - Amidst the pandemic, sharing voter information is more important than ever. Learn how to be a [Voter Registration Agent](#) and help others to become registered voters.
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## Debate Watch

New Mexico First is hosting a virtual Debate Watch Party, to engage and empower New Mexicans to share diverse political perspectives with one another. We would like to invite you to join us for this series of facilitated cross partisan discussions.

For more information, visit:

<http://nmfirst.org/events/debates>



[Learn More](#)

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## Tip for Civic Engagement

In the Prayer of Saint Francis, we are reminded to be an instrument of what we want to see in the world. If we want to see active engagement in civic life, then we must actively invite, welcome, and support others who step into efforts bigger than their own narrow interests. We must do that with great humility, knowing that none of us alone has all of the worthwhile and meaningful answers. If we want improvement, it is best achieved together. If we want greater justice and equity, then we have to reimagine and test more just and equitable ways of engaging in dialogue and decision-making, and then see the results through with perseverance. If we want stronger, healthier, more connected communities, we need to lend our strength to high-integrity connections that are designed to benefit

communities rather than siloed approaches that are driven by ego and territorialism. Building healthier communities cannot be done on or for communities. It must be done by and with communities. Being intentional matters. We must design systems and policy change approaches in ways that are most likely to yield the results we are aiming to achieve. Across our diverse belief systems, many of us have traditions that encourage us to ask ourselves, “What will I be an instrument of today?”

This section is authored by Lilly Irvin-Vitela, President and Executive Director of New Mexico First. She invites you to connect! Email her at [lilly@nmfirst.org](mailto:lilly@nmfirst.org).

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## **Our Mission. Our Values.**

### **Our Mission**

To be a catalyst for positive change by engaging citizens in policy and enabling action.

### **Our Core Values**

Meaningfully engaging New Mexicans in public policy; Striving for and respecting consensus; Pursuing and respecting diverse points of views; Ensuring inclusion and transparency; Rising above partisan politics; Changing policy to improve people's lives; Creating an informed citizenry that is powerfully motivated; Reaching out statewide including rural and tribal communities; Partnering with others; Promoting civility and Democracy at its best!

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