

https://www.myheraldreview.com/news/bisbee/local-nonprofit-receives-needed-funding-for-food-begins-new-program-to-build-mental-health-component/article_40fe382f-88f4-4eec-aedc-1db91eeab5cb.html

FEATURED TOP STORY

Local nonprofit receives needed funding for food, Begins new program to build mental health component

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Cochise Harm Reduction provides hot meals on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday's for the unhoused. CHR received \$50,000 from the Southeastern Arizona Food Bank to continue the nutritional program for the unhoused. American Legion Post 16 donates its kitchen for CHR to prepare the meals.

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BISBEE — Things are looking up for the nonprofit that supports the unhoused with food, hygiene supplies and items to help them with their life on the streets.

When the Trump administration decided to shutter or decimate federal agencies which assisted a variety of outreach efforts across the country, founder and executive director of Cochise Harm Reduction Lu Funk and the board of directors were rightfully worried about how they would continue the care to the vulnerable people who have grown to depend on the supplies they provided.

“We believe all humans deserve access to food, housing, and medical supplies to reduce the harms of drug use, community care, and purpose,” said Funk.

Now, the winds have changed and thanks to the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, CHR has received \$50,000 for the operation like it has for the past two years. The food bank received \$1 million from the state which was slated to go to Bisbee to set one up to assist nonprofits who feed those on a low income, are disabled or unhoused.

The food bank has been a vital partner for CHR’s continued expansion over the past three years. It allows CHR to partner with local farmers and food producers to source nutritious local vegetables and fruits and incorporate good health into hot meals and bagged lunches thanks to the volunteer chef Don Maldonado. They also provide nonperishable food items.

The small CHR van is packed up daily with hot meals and lunch bags along with basic commodities to help their survival. CHR provides hygiene products, clothing, blankets, tents, sleeping bags, tarps, flashlights, batteries. Even dog food is available for those with furry companions. Clean needles and naloxone are also available for those still caught in the web of addiction.

In 2024, CHR supplied 17,000 hot meals and provided people with boxed and canned food for the county-wide Outreach Program. They hope to near double that amount in 2025 to 25,000.

“After a long winter here in Cochise County, spring is finally here and at CHR we've been celebrating more funding coming in to support our existing and some new programs,” stated Funk.

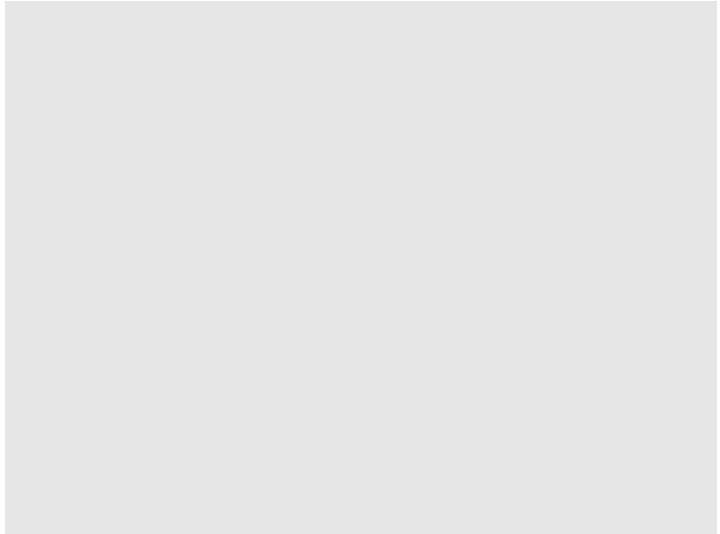
One of the programs CHR has started is in partnership with the National Council of Mental Wellbeing to provide staff mentoring which will allow CHR to offer a Peer Navigator Program in Cochise County. The council is a nonprofit that delivers mental health and substance use recovery services in the U.S. Staff believes “mental wellbeing can be reached by anyone,” including people living with or recovering from mental health or substance use challenges. The council drives policy and social change on behalf of more than 3,200 mental health and substance use treatment organizations to help over 15 million children, adults and families.

Funk added, “The Peer Navigator Program works very closely with our Outreach Program to offer more personalized one-on-one assistance to our participants. The pilot of this program will be offered exclusively in Bisbee and Sierra Vista, but our goal is to secure additional funding to support this program's expansion into all of Cochise County. We will support folks needing court advocacy, assistance accessing services, treatment, vital documents.”

She and her team have lifted some clients out of the chaos of addiction or who lost jobs or homes and found themselves at the mercy of a society not always empathetic to their situations. And that’s one of the reasons CHR has been so successful – they do not judge nor preach about the predicament clients find themselves in. Instead, they help. They give hope.

In fact, CHR staff are recovered addicts who can relate to the unfortunate circumstances of those they help. Those that have taken the steps to free themselves from addiction are invited to apply for employment which has been a great asset to the organization.

“We are a group of organizers who used drugs, who are in recovery, have navigated the criminal justice system, are street-based and include survivors of violence. We prioritize folks with this ‘lived expertise’ for involvement in our organization,” she said.



Cochise Harm Reduction Hot Food Manager Dan Maldonado gets a salad ready for a lunch for the unhoused this week. Along with hot meals CHR also provides some 160 sack lunches on Monday and Thursday's.

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CHR accepts monetary donations, gently used clothing and now needs volunteers to assist Maldonado with food preparation.

CHR's clients need socks, beanies, batteries, flashlights, solar-powered external batteries, propane, sleeping bags, tents, blankets, tarps, hygiene supplies, gift cards, phone chargers, water bottles, sunscreen, condoms, and even pregnancy tests.

For more information, visit the website <https://cochiseharmreduction.org/> or call (520) 485-9698.

Pull Quote

“Cochise Harm Reduction is led exclusively by people who have been impacted by the War on Drugs. We are a group of organizers who use drugs, who are in recovery, have navigated the criminal justice system, are street-based and/or are survivors of violence. We prioritize folks with this lived expertise for involvement in our organization. We believe all humans deserve access to food, housing, and medical supplies to reduce the harms of drug use, community care, and purpose.”

Lu Funk, founder and executive director of Cochise Harm Reduction

How to help

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Give support: Donate to the mission, fundraise, educate yourself by attending an overdose prevention training, help expand the network by spreading the word.

Give time: Street outreach, make kits, network opportunities such as participation in events, support with finding resources for nutritional support, hygiene products, clothing, outdoor living items such as blankets, sleeping bags, tarps, propane. Help is also needed with food preparation.

Give talent: Help with administrative work such as assisting with data entry, organizing, mentor a peer.

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Bisbee/County Reporter