

# FOOD MATTERS!

FALL 2024



## Inside Oregon Food Bank: A Conversation with Itsa Ortiz

Meet Itsa Ortiz, Associate Director of Equity, People and Culture at Oregon Food Bank. Itsa's committed to advancing our mission and helping staff navigate the workplace with compassion and connection.

"In HR, there aren't a lot of people like me. It can be difficult to relate and share experiences with someone who doesn't know anything about being first generation Mexican American, coming from immigrant parents, and everything that entails," said Itsa.

Itsa's passion for ending hunger at its root comes from her own lived experience: "For my family and a lot of other immigrant families, there is fear of deportation, being found, being separated from your family. I shouldn't be afraid to utilize a benefit or any kind of program that is meant to help me. There's so much stigma around poverty, but it's something that's created by our own country. And it's something that can be solved."

Read Itsa's story at [OregonFoodBank.org/Itsa](https://OregonFoodBank.org/Itsa) 🐾

# My Birthday Wish: Support Food for All Oregonians

September is Hunger Action Month, the annual nationwide campaign each September, where we come together to raise awareness about hunger in America and inspire action.



Having been a food banker for so many years (28 now!) I vividly remember the first Hunger Action Month. It was established in 2008 at the same time that the national food bank network changed its name from America's Second Harvest to Feeding America. The establishment of Hunger Action Month was born from the realization that merely providing food could not end hunger. Food only treats the symptoms of hunger. To cure hunger, we have to address its root causes systemically, and to do that, we need a movement.

The movement in Oregon right now is focused on the Food for All Oregonians campaign. Food for All Oregonians starts with the principle that you deserve food if you are human. Period. It highlights the harm and the irony that much of the food grown, packed and prepared in Oregon is handled by people who are ineligible for federal grocery benefits like SNAP. Food for All Oregonians seeks to introduce state legislation to ensure all humans in Oregon who need help buying groceries get that help.

I am somewhat astounded that, 16 Hunger Action Months later, we are still working on basic access to food assistance. However, I also take to heart John Lewis' wise words: "Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year, it is the struggle of a lifetime."

September is also my birthday month — this year, I turn 55! You can join the movement AND give me a birthday present by taking action this Hunger Action Month!

**Susannah Morgan**  
*President, Oregon Food Bank*



# September Is Hunger Action Month: Food Is a Human Right

**Food is a human right.** When we don't have enough food, it affects every part of our lives – our health, our dignity and every aspect of our well-being. Everyone deserves to live without fear of hunger, no matter where we are born.

Yet, more than 62,000 Oregonians are currently excluded from food assistance and other essential programs simply because of their immigration status.

This September is Hunger Action Month – a time when people all across the country join together to fight hunger. This month, we call on you, our community, to take action and support Food for All Oregonians.

Learn how you can help end hunger this Hunger Action Month at [OregonFoodBank.org/HumanRight](https://OregonFoodBank.org/HumanRight)



“Everybody has the right to food, whatever their immigration status. Food is essential; it's not something 'extra' that I need to be successful. Everybody needs access to food.”

—EMAN ABBAS, OFB Ambassador



## Sign the Food for All Oregonians Pledge

Food for All Oregonians is a community-led effort to ensure that everyone in Oregon has access to the food they need. Sign the pledge to share that you believe food is a human right. Sign the Food for All Oregonians pledge at [FoodForAllOR.org/Pledge](https://FoodForAllOR.org/Pledge)



## Celebrating National Latine Heritage Month

Each year, the United States observes and celebrates Latine Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15. Latine Heritage Month honors the histories, cultures and contributions of Hispanic, Latine and Indigenous people in the United States.

“In HR, there aren’t a lot of people like me. It can be difficult to relate and share experiences with someone who doesn’t know anything about being first generation Mexican American, coming from immigrant parents, and everything that entails. You grow up quickly when you have parents who don’t speak a lot of English, who need you to help them navigate a foreign land and a foreign language.”



—ITSA ORTIZ, Oregon Food Bank

In the work to end hunger, we remind our community to center the experiences and challenges that Hispanic and Latine people continue to face. Systemic racism and xenophobia drive hunger at disproportionate rates in Latine communities across Oregon. Almost 80 percent of Latine immigrant parents surveyed in Oregon in 2020 reported being worried whether food would run out before they received enough money to buy more. And Latine individuals who are women, LGBTQ+ and/or disabled experience food insecurity at even higher rates.

As we commemorate this month with joy-filled festivities, we maintain hope that we can create a world where Latine communities are free from violence and injustice.

Find Latine Heritage Month events near you at [OregonFoodBank.org/LatineHeritageMonth](https://OregonFoodBank.org/LatineHeritageMonth) 🌱

# Coalición Fortaleza Rebuilds in the Rogue Valley

Erica Alexia Ledesma is the Executive Director of Coalición Fortaleza, an organization rebuilding and reimagining land, homes and community spaces in the Rogue Valley after the destruction of the 2020 wildfires.

Coalición Fortaleza sprouted from the ashes of the Alameda wildfire. On September 8, 2020, thousands of community members woke up to smoke, strong winds and evacuation orders. Amid a pandemic and an already existing housing crisis, thousands of neighbors lost their homes in a matter of hours, the fallout of which would hit BIPOC and lower-income families the hardest.

“I’m proud to say that I was born here,” Erica says. “I was raised here. I’m working with the community that has seen me grow up. I can’t just pick up and leave. These are my family, my friends, my relatives. I feel conviction and I’m committed to this work and to see what’s possible. To dream.”

Read more about Coalición Fortaleza helping to rebuild in the Rogue Valley at [OregonFoodBank.org/CoalicionFortaleza](https://OregonFoodBank.org/CoalicionFortaleza) 🌱



## Reimagining Housing, Healthcare and Food Access in Eastern Oregon

The Ontario Community Food Center will open in late 2026! Located on a campus in one of Ontario’s most under-resourced neighborhoods, the Center will be nestled between Valley Family Health Care and River Bend Place, an affordable housing community. These wrap-around services will lower barriers to food, healthcare, housing and more for our community members. Learn More at [OregonFoodBank.org/OntarioFoodCenter](https://OregonFoodBank.org/OntarioFoodCenter) 🌱



## Thank You for Your Support!



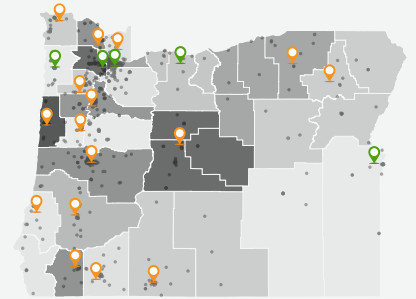
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## Food is Available to All Who Need It!



Our Network includes 1,400+ free food markets, pantries and meal sites throughout Oregon and Southwest Washington — and many locations offer contactless pick-up or delivery options.

If you or someone you know needs support, know that resources are available to help families with the rising cost of food and housing.

Find food assistance sites near you at [OregonFoodFinder.org](https://OregonFoodFinder.org) — now available in 19 languages common to the Pacific Northwest!



[OregonFoodBank.org](https://OregonFoodBank.org)  
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