



# Operator Spotlight!

Showcasing the passion, talents, and hard work of Arizona child nutrition professionals.



## Terra Masias

Child Nutrition Manager, St. Mary's Food Bank

Hometown: Phoenix, Arizona

Current City of Residence: Chandler, Arizona

Favorite Childhood School Meal: Quesadillas

When I was a kid, I wanted to grow up to be a: Pediatrician

### What prompted you to start working to support child nutrition?

I have worked in public and community health since I was in college working part-time as a WIC associate. I loved seeing children grow and thrive month to month. I realized that health starts during childhood and much of it is focused on nutrition. As diabetes runs rampant through my genetic code, I was determined to do what I could to eliminate this disease from occurring within me personally. Even though my early dreams of being a pediatrician didn't pan out, I love being able to contribute to the well-being of children through proper nutrition.

### Tell us about a specific project or initiative you have championed that you are proud of.

I was hired at the Food Bank nearly 10 years ago to incept the At-Risk Afterschool Meal program which at the time was a new federal program. After much learning, navigating, and rolling up my sleeves, we served our first sites for federal reimbursement 6 months after I was hired. We started with 12 sites and now, we serve meals to approximately 7000 kids daily at 150 locations (pre-pandemic).

### Assuming time and money were not barriers, what would be your top priority as far as changes you would like to see related to Child Nutrition Program operations at your organization?

We would love to expand our hot meal program to feed more kids both locally and in Northern Arizona. We are looking at ways we can freeze our hot meals and send to rural Arizona with re-heating instructions.

### What are the top three skills a Child Nutrition Program operator should have?

Passion for the work, the ability to navigate Federal systems, leading and coaching others for success

### What advice would you give to a younger version of yourself just starting in the role of a Child Nutrition Program operator?

Enjoy what you do and focus on the end result of feeding high need children to make this your purpose. This mindset helps to offset any high challenges you may face in your day to day work.