

Fighting Hunger In Los Cabos

New food bank is a start to solving the problem

BY STEPHANIE MCGLASHAN

Baja California Sur's population is struggling with high rates of food insecurity, and the social, health and economic challenges that come with it. Joel Nájera, the International Community Foundation's

food security field coordinator for Baja California Sur, is leading an initiative to solve this problem. With the help of ICF's food security team and other partners, tremendous momentum for the movement has been generated. Land for a food bank has been donated, arrangements for food supply has been established and public and private leaders have expressed early interest in assisting with fundraising.

The ICF - an American-based non-profit that facilitates inter-



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national granting for projects supporting environmental, education, health and human services - conducted a comprehensive food security analysis of Los Cabos and La Paz in 2014. This study found that in Baja California Sur, seven out of ten households are food insecure and at least one in 10 households reported having been hungry in the past three months.

Things like negative stereotypes of food-insecure individuals, issues of distribution inequity and a lack

not popular with less educated low income people.

Another part of the problem is that the system delivering the food has become complicated, commodified and rigid. The current industrialized food system is damaging to communities on multiple levels and has aggravated food insecurity.

Far too many of Los Cabos' communities face the problems of hunger, poor health and social isolation, and a solution is desperately

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of a food policies all perpetuate hunger. Disparity in the distribution of nutritious and affordable food is one of several leading causes of malnutrition. Food stores in low-income communities typically offer more pre-packaged, calorie dense, low-grade nutritious food items because that is what sells. Fresh produce, whole grains and more wholesome foods, on the other hand, are commonly beyond a low-income budget and

needed. One part of this solution is the food bank that will be located in the new Los Cabos Youth Center in San José. This center has the potential to bring a positive change towards a more equitable, nutritious, accessible, culturally appropriate and sustainable food system for locals.

This has been an incredible work in progress and, so far, it has established a strong alliance of **CONTINUED ON PAGE 33**

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FIGHTING HUNGER IN LOS...

continued from page 28

food security enthusiasts. A food bank is an opportunity to provide a welcoming space where people can gather to cook, grow, share and advocate for good food. This space will provide people with emergency access to high-quality food in a dignified setting that doesn't compromise their self-worth. The goal is to provide a food bank that offers multifaceted, integrated and responsive programming in a shared space where food builds health, hope, skills and community.

Food security and hunger should not be determined by wealth or status; healthy food is a right. Healthy individual choices require a supportive environment where food is accessible and affordable. Healthy food environments promote physical, social, environmental, and economic well-being and should be experienced by all. Los Cabos needs a participatory, skill-building and educational approach to solve the issues of food insecurity. Involved citizens,

communities, local organizations and government agencies are all key players in the fight against hunger, and this is the vision for the food bank.

To give, please visit icfdn.org, contact Eliza Brennan, Marketing and Development Manager at 619-336-2254, or e-mail her at icfdn.org.

FLAVIO FIGHTS FEVERISHLY...

continued from page 29

enough to winter in the marine rich waters of Baja Sur and the plankton filled currents around El Mogote, considered the sanctuary for whale sharks in La Bahía de La Paz. This is a popular area for whale sharks to hang out with their family or friends.

Life is good for these sharks, as long as their water remains clean and uncontaminated from plastics, chemicals, radiation, or ugly oil spills. Or, of course, as long as they don't go belly up on the sand, or get struck by sharp motor blades from fish-

ing or commercial vessels. They hate that. Fortunately, some concerned humans are taking action on environmental issues designed to protect the species, and they are making a positive difference, although much more needs to be done.

The whale shark is a protected species and the Mexican government is doing its part as well in

ensuring protection. Whales are good for the economy, too. People are excited to see Flavio and his friends when they come to town. Some spend a good chunk of change on whale watching trips and full coolers of beer, and are happy just to see them swim around. They are photogenic creatures, too, and don't seem to mind having their picture

taken with fascinated tourists. Swimming with the gentle giants is an awe-inspiring thrill, and everybody goes away from the experience with wide eyes and effervescent emotions, and memories that can last a lifetime.

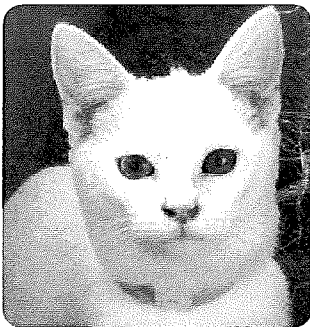
In addition to Baja Sur, whale sharks also cruise the waters of La Bahía de Los Angeles, in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35

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bel purrrrs just thinking about it.



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