

# Operation Better World

Ford's local philanthropic arm teams up with Tempe Leadership Class XXIX to provide fresh food to Valley residents in need *By Jennifer Johnson*

When Ford Motor Company's Operation Better World Phoenix committee—the company's local philanthropic arm—heard about Tempe Leadership Class XXIX's Fresh Truck Project through the website bucktruck.org, they knew it was an obvious fit.

Ford has a history of supporting food banks on both the national and local levels. Both Mesa-based United Food Bank and Phoenix-based St. Mary's Food Bank have received Ford grants over the past several years.

"Locally, Ford has given more than \$175,000 in grants and vehicle donations to hunger-related causes over the past five years and donated more than 30,000 pounds of food as part of Ford dealership-sponsored food drives," said Steve Papanikolas, Phoenix regional manager for Ford Motor Company. "When we found out about this Tempe Leadership project, we knew we wanted to get involved and help their leadership class make a difference in our community."

Tempe Leadership Class XXIX, made up of 18 people who live and work in Tempe, realized that access to nutritious fresh food is a key way to eliminate urban food deserts and increase the health of those who face hunger every day in Arizona. So the class established the Fresh Truck Project to raise money to purchase a refrigerated food truck for the United Food Bank.

Enough money was raised to purchase a previously owned refrigerated delivery truck, thanks to donations from Walmart and Allstate, and through various fundraising efforts. As a bonus to the project, Ford stepped up and donated a brand-new refrigerated Ford Transit Connect to the effort, which will enable community-based nonprofits like the Salvation Army, Tempe Community Action Agency and the Boys & Girls Clubs of the East Valley to get fresh produce to those in need. The Transit Connect, valued at \$31,000, is ideal for nonprofits that need a fuel-efficient option to transport goods to their clients.

United Food Bank will deploy these two Fresh Trucks to partner agencies across the Phoenix area that lack sufficient refrigeration. This increased capacity will allow for local and neighborhood food pantries to distribute more produce, dairy and other fresh foods instead of only distributing nonperishable packaged foods.

"The Fresh Truck Project aimed to eliminate this gap in the food supply chain here in Greater Phoenix," said Daniel Milner, Class XXIX's chairman. "Our class believed that all people deserve access to fresh, nutritious food. This is a huge step toward making that possible."

"Each class is required to complete a class project as a condition of their graduation from Tempe Leadership," said Tanya Chavez, president of the Tempe Leadership Board of Directors, "and they must see the project through from start to finish. We are thrilled with the success of Class XXIX's Fresh Truck project, and we are very proud of the class' efforts."

For more information on Ford's philanthropic efforts, visit [corporate.ford.com/community](http://corporate.ford.com/community). For more information on Tempe Leadership, visit [tempeleadership.org](http://tempeleadership.org). ■

