



## KIDS KITCHEN, LLC

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# Organizations Come Together to Educate, Feed Santa Fe Kids in Need

Len Rand and his wife, Barb, were touring the former Kaune Elementary School in Santa Fe shortly after it was purchased by United Way of Santa Fe County. Len is on the board of The Food Depot – northern New Mexico’s food bank – and his wife is on the board of United Way of Santa Fe County.

**It was during that tour that inspiration struck.**

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“ *Bringing healthy foods into the classroom increases students’ awareness, appreciation and knowledge of healthy eating.* ”

**President and CEO of  
United Way of Santa Fe County**

Katherine Freeman

**Partnership in Action:** From left, Dion Silva, Regional President – Santa Fe, Enterprise Bank & Trust; Katherine Freeman, President and CEO of United Way of Santa Fe County; Len Rand, Philanthropist and Board Member of The Food Depot; and Sherry Hooper, Executive Director of The Food Depot.



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**President and CEO of United Way of Santa Fe County**  
Katherine Freeman







“We walked into the school’s kitchen, and it hit us that something great could be done with this space,” Rand says. “Something that could really help the kids and families of Santa Fe and the northern New Mexico area.”

The inspiration turned into a dialog, and that dialog grew into a joint venture. The idea hatched on that day is now Kids Kitchen, LLC, a joint venture between The Food Depot and United Way of Santa Fe County.

## A Mission of Education, Hope

Kids Kitchen educates and empowers children and families to make healthy food choices through hands-on learning with fresh, affordable foods. With a small staff and an inspired group of volunteers, the organization provides 600 meals a day to children in need. That number is growing daily.

“The facility is capable of making up to 2,000 meals a day. We are pacing ourselves but obviously want to do as much as we can to support the community,” says Katherine Freeman, president and CEO of United Way of Santa Fe County.

During the school year, The Food Depot works with Kids Kitchen to provide meals to kids after school, outside of the school lunch program. They ramp up in the summer when children may not otherwise have access to fresh, healthy meals. The organization partners with various groups, including the Boys & Girls Clubs and the city of Santa Fe.

A big part of the organization’s mission is to educate children and families about food and nutrition. Part of providing a fresh, hot meal is to help kids try new foods and learn about how nutrition impacts their lives.



# Community Partnerships Make It Happen

Kids Kitchen is a great example of northern New Mexico organizations joining forces to positively impact the community.

“It took a combination of things to pull this off,” says Sherry Hooper, executive director of The Food Depot. The Food Depot has critical resources such as a strong volunteer base, including drivers, and United Way has the infrastructure that was needed to make it happen.”

Bringing the kitchen up to code and making it a functional space for Kids Kitchen was essential to bringing the program to life. In addition, food preparation equipment, a delivery truck and heaters and coolers to transport meals were needed. The build-out of a commercial kitchen isn't cheap and wasn't in the budget.

Dion Silva, regional president – Santa Fe at Enterprise Bank & Trust, got wind of the Kids Kitchen program and stepped in to offer the financing needed at a lower interest rate and without fees. Another important community partnership was born.

“After learning what they were trying to do, I reached out and asked how we could help,” Silva explains. “We care deeply about this community, and we wanted to help make this possible for Kids Kitchen.”

“What's particularly amazing to us is that after hearing about the Kids Kitchen program, the bank came to us to ask how they could help support our mission,” Hooper says. “Not only did they make the financing happen with favorable terms, they continue to use their connections in the community to tell people about our mission and engage people in the program.”

The Kids Kitchen team continues to scale up operations, and sees a bright future ahead for their small staff, volunteers and the many children and families who benefit from the organization's mission.

“When you see the look on a child's face when they realize they get to eat dinner that night, the impact is obvious and so fulfilling,” Hooper says.



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**The Food Depot Executive Director**  
Sherry Hooper

## ABOUT KIDS KITCHEN, LLC

Kids Kitchen, LLC is a joint venture between United Way of Santa Fe County and The Food Depot – a food bank serving Santa Fe and northern New Mexico. Kids Kitchen educates and empowers children and families to make healthy food choices through hands-on learning with fresh, affordable foods.

