

Basic Needs

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2023 Statewide Symposium in Support of Service Members, Veterans & Their Families

APRIL 19-20, 2023 | PHOENIX, ARIZONA

 **arizona coalition**
for **military families**



Basic Needs & Their Foundational Impact On All Other SDOHs

Food Insecurities



Facilitators



Erica Leffler
*Licensed Clinical Social
Worker*



Alisha Williams
*Career Specialist
Arizona Coalition for
Military Families*

Agenda

1 Food Insecurity Basics

2 Barriers to Food

3 Veggies for Vets

4 Harvest Compassion Center

5 Veterans First

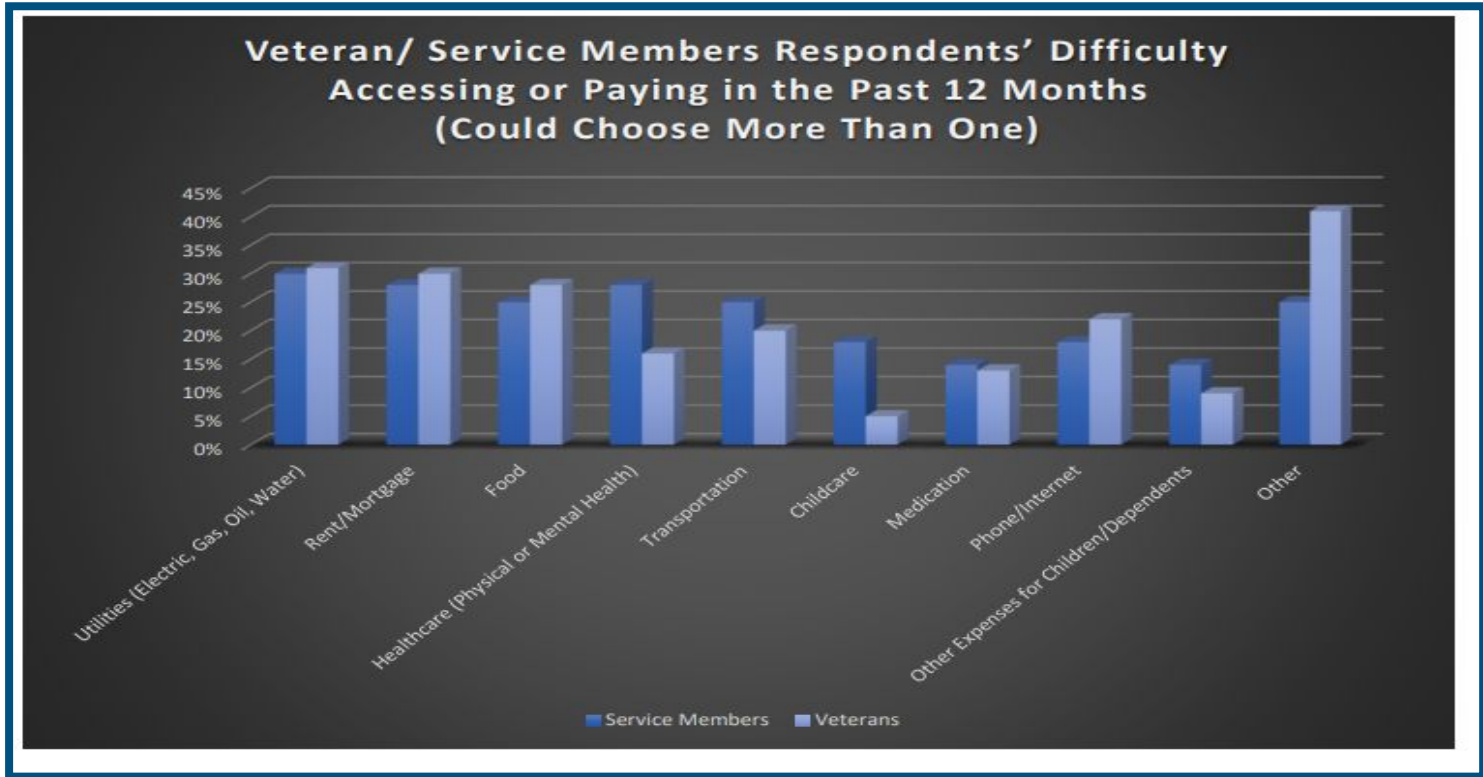
6 Closing

Icebreaker

Is stealing to feed a starving child wrong? Why or why not?

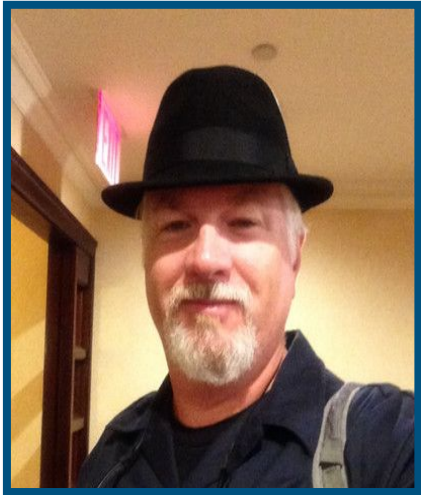


Basic Needs Data





Billy Gibson- Guest Speaker



Barriers to Food

Dr. Isabel Kozak- Veggies for Veterans



Combating Food Insecurity within the Veteran Population in Phoenix, Arizona

Isabel M Kozak, DNP, ANP-C

Doctor of Nursing Practice

Assistant Chief Of Staff for Community Medicine

Phoenix VA Health Care System

Objectives

- ▶ 1- Learn about food insecurity in both the general population and in Veterans
- ▶ 2- Discuss 'food desert'
- ▶ 3- Raise awareness on VA's efforts to combat food insecurity through Veggies for Veterans program

Food Insecurity in the USA

Nearly 1 in 7 households have experienced food insecurity

13.7 million households, or 10.5% of all U.S. households, experienced food insecurity at some point

35 million Americans were either unable to acquire enough food to meet their needs, or uncertain of where their next meal might come from

** 2020 Social Science and Medicine

** 2019 National Public Radio

Food Insecurity Globally

As of 2020, an estimated 2.4 billion people—30% of the global population—were considered moderately to severely food insecure

Food insecurity is a complex construct consisting of four dimensions: availability, access, utilization, and stability

**** Measuring food insecurity: An introduction to tools for human biologists and ecologists, American Journal of Human Biology, 2022**

Food Insecurity and Health Outcomes- EBP

- ▶ Nutrients 2022 - Infants residing in food insecure households are more likely to have poor health, be nutrient deficient and be hospitalized with poor health and developmental challenges, including cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional challenges
- ▶ New England Journal of Medicine 2023- Experiencing food insecurity is associated with mental health disorders, such as depression and anxiety
- ▶ Public Health Nutrition 2022 - Results showed Food insecurity was linked with poor sleep quality and quantity in adults 18 years and older

Veterans Food Insecurity

- ▶ Nearly 1.5 million Veterans in the US are living below the federal poverty level
- ▶ An additional 2.4 million Veterans are living paycheck to pay-check at < 200% of the federal poverty level.
- ▶ Estimates of food insecurity among veterans vary widely, ranging from 6% to 24%—nearly twice that of the general US population

** Prevalence and Determinants of Unmet Social Needs Among Rural and Urban Veterans *Journal of Health Care* 2023

**Federal Practitioner 2020

Veterans Food Insecurity

- ▶ 1 in 9 working-age veterans lived in food-insecure households
- ▶ According to the Census, 1.2 million low-income veterans use SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) to make groceries more affordable
- ▶ More veterans are eligible for SNAP but don't participate because they don't know they're qualified or are ashamed of needing help

Veterans Food Insecurity

- ▶ Veterans have on average poorer health and health behaviors than do civilians
- ▶ Veterans are at high risk of post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, and other mental health conditions, which increase the risk of functional disability
- ▶ Mental and physical health status affect workforce participation, which impacts income and thus food affordability

Veterans Food Insecurity

Higher rates of food insecurity have been reported among certain Veteran high-risk subgroups:

- ▶ Veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan (27%)
- ▶ Female veterans (28%)
- ▶ Homeless and formerly homeless veterans (49%)
- ▶ Veterans with serious mental illness (35%)

Food Desert- what's that?

In urban settings- Food desert is living 1 mile away from a supermarket

In rural areas- greater than 10 miles from a supermarket

About 19 million people, or roughly 6% of the population, live in a food desert

2.1 million households both lived in a food desert and lacked access to a vehicle in 2015, according to the USDA

USDA estimate found that groceries sold in food deserts can cost significantly more than groceries sold in suburban markets, meaning people in low-income communities impacted by food insecurity often pay more money for their food

** 2019 NPR

How the Phoenix
VA is combating
food insecurity
within the
Veteran
population

Answer--

**Veggies for
Veterans**

- ▶ EIG (Excellence in Government) Project
- ▶ Co-founder: Dr Isabel Kozak, ACOS Community Medicine Phoenix VAMC
- ▶ Co- Founder and community partner: Diana Gregory, CEO of Gregory's Fresh Markets 501C (mobile market)
- ▶ Established April 2017
- ▶ EIG 2018 Outstanding Alumni Award Recipient

Veggies for Veterans Dashboard

- ▶ LOCATED IN VETERAN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING WITHIN A FOOD DESERT IN PHOENIX, AZ
- ▶ MONTHLY MARKETS IN VICTORY PLACE FOR PREVIOUSLY HOMELESS AND LOW- INCOME VETERANS
- ▶ PRE-COVID – GAVE FREE \$10 FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES, EGGS AND BOTTLED WATER AT EVERY MARKET
- ▶ DURING/POST-COVID- SWITCHED TO BAGGED PRODUCE
- ▶ ALL MARKETS ARE MANNED BY VOLUNTEERS AND SPONSORS, NO PAID STAFF
- ▶ MULTIPLE TELEVISION, RADIO AND PRINT COVERAGE



Veggies for Veterans

Market Pre-
Covid:
Veterans
shopped for
fresh
produce with
Free \$10
vouchers

**Veterans
signed consent for pictures



Veggies for Veterans Market

During / Post
Covid

Volunteers shown
are Veterans, Free
\$10 bags are pre-
packed with fresh
produce and
distributed to
Transitional
Housing and
Curbside Home
Delivery

** Veterans signed
consent for pictures

Veggies for Veterans:

Veteran encounters
April 2017-
Feb 2023

Monthly Markets in Transitional Housing Victory Place:
Veteran encounters: 5,257

Phoenix VA Hospital Markets for all Veterans: Veteran encounters: 9,262

Curbside Home Delivery- started March 2021 as part of Shark Tank VA:

Veteran encounters: 600

Total Veggies for Veterans encounters: 14,519

Total Markets: 98

Ending Transitional housing markets as of 2023 – will replace with larger markets at 32nd street clinic

Veggies for Veterans Donated Funds 2017-2023

Funds from AZ Department of Veterans'
Services Grants: \$10,000

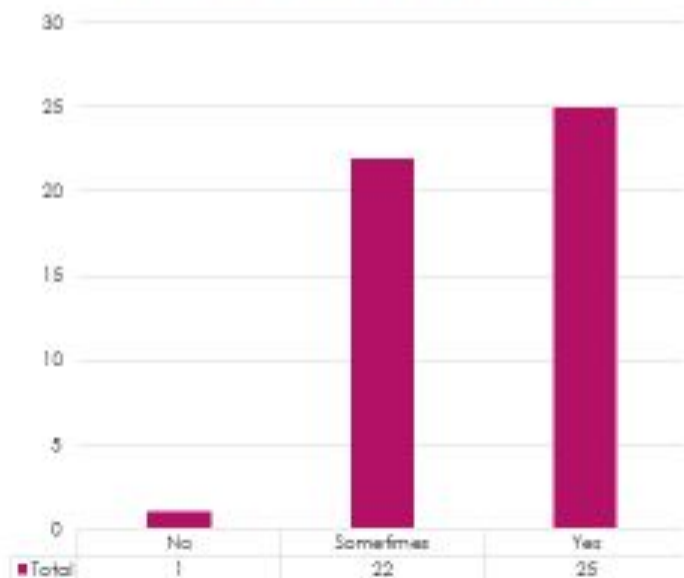
Funds from local donors: \$ 10,000

Funds from Diana Gregory Sponsors:
\$130,000

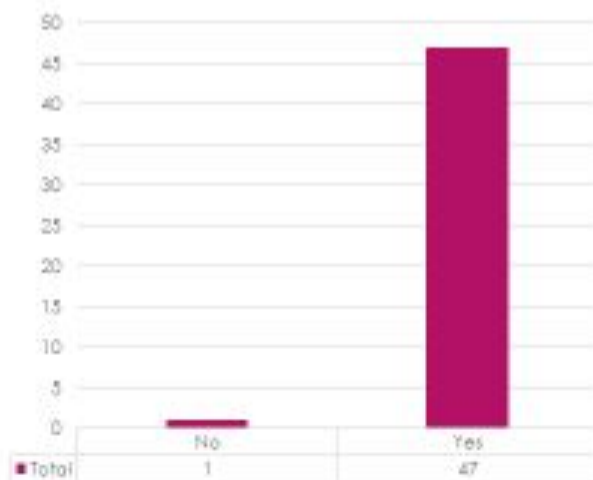
Total Donated Funds to 501C: \$150,000

April 2017 Victory Place Pre-Market Data (previously homeless) Veggies for Veterans

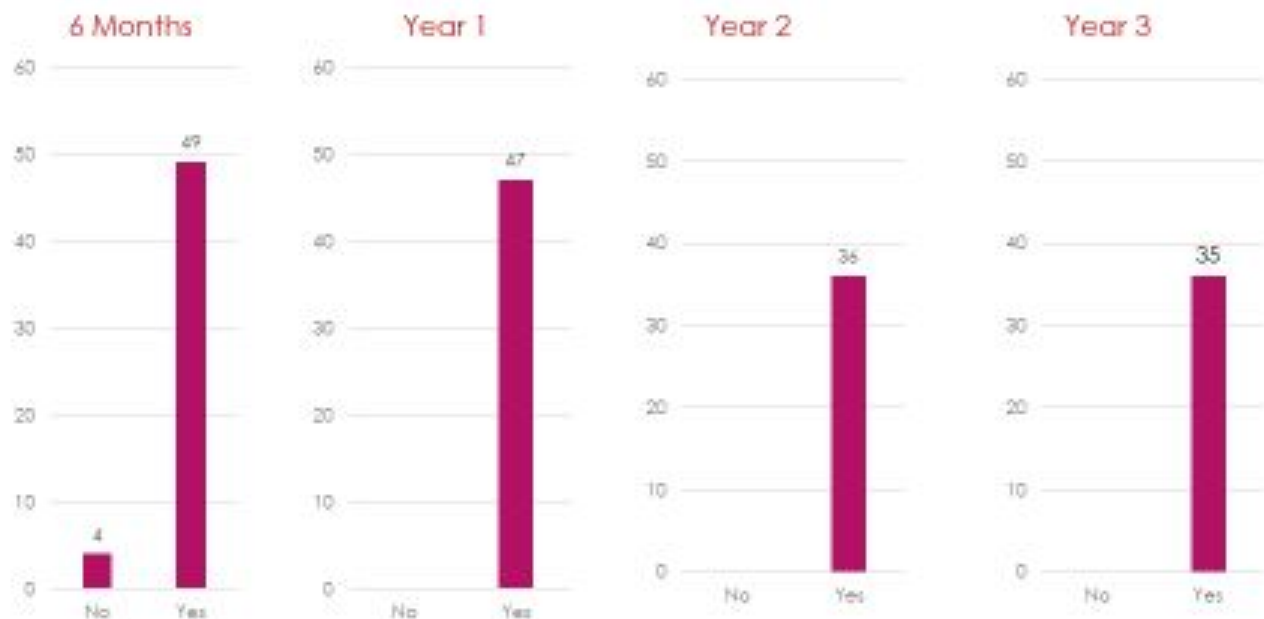
Do you currently eat fresh produce?



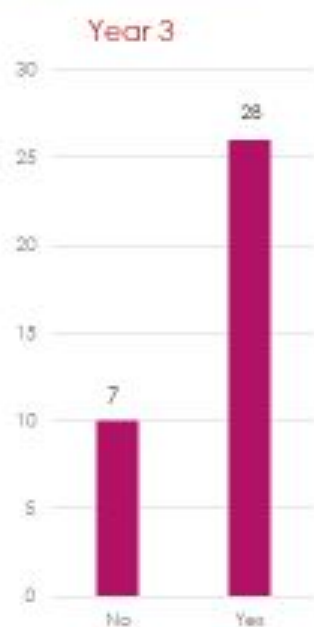
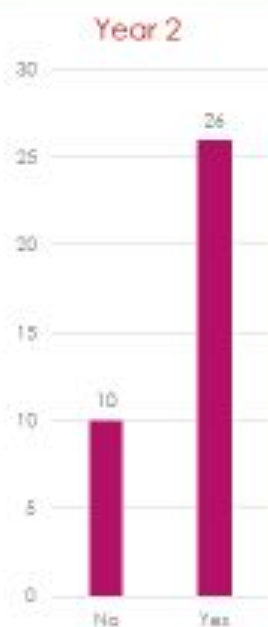
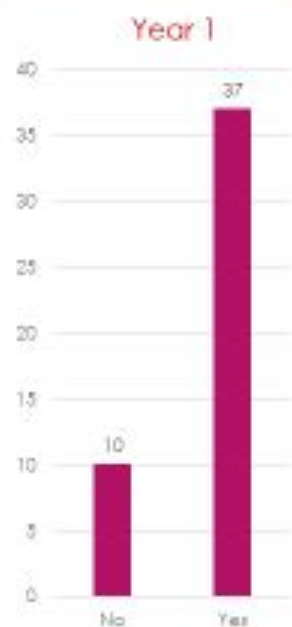
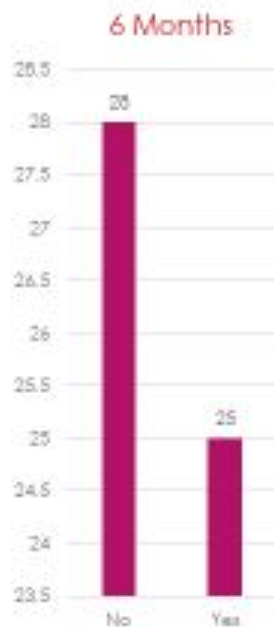
If you are given a food voucher for fresh produce, would you use it?



Veggies for Veterans Post Market survey : Did you eat fresh produce since the last visit? (no COVID data Years 4-6)



Veggies for Veterans: Do you feel the \$10 voucher allowed you to purchase enough fresh produce this month? (No COVID data Years 4-6)



Veggies for Veterans Supplemental Assistance

- ▶ Markets are held at the Phoenix VA hospital 5 x year and 32nd Street Clinic 3x year
- ▶ Markets distribute 500-700 bags within 2 hours secondary to high demand
- ▶ Markets also host: American Heart Association -donated 125 blood pressure cuffs, Flu vaccine clinics, Whole health, Nutrition/ cancer awareness, All of US VA research



Veggies for Veterans

Innovations-

Drive thru and

Shark Tank

Curbside

Home Delivery

Pilot

Curbside Home Delivery Pilot started March 2021- 60 bags delivered to Veteran's homes by Social workers per month x 10 months

Drive thru distribution started at the Phoenix VA 'drop off area' during special markets- prevents Veterans and families from going into VA hospitals for the sole purpose of getting a produce bag

Volunteers are screened and use masks, gloves and social distancing- volunteer time 2-4 hours (ie- students, Veterans, sponsor employees, active military, etc)

Shark Tank: Curbside Home Delivery

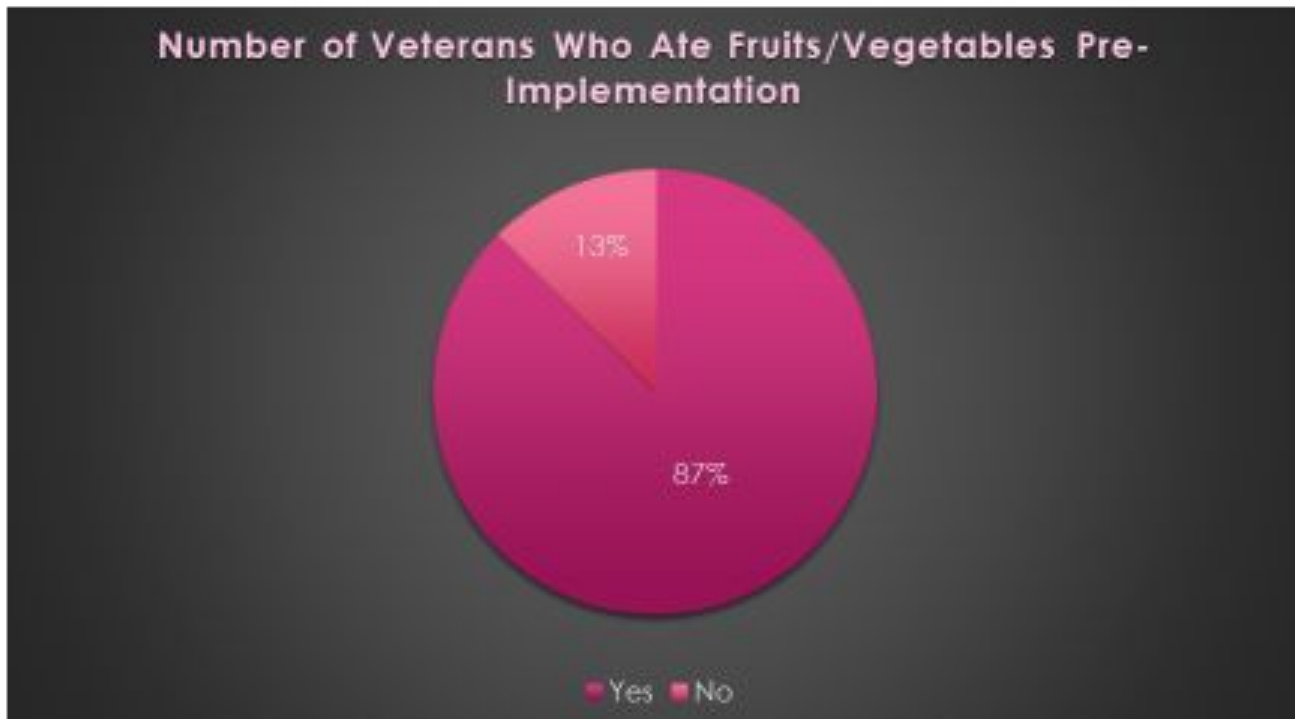
March- Dec 2021 / 10-month Pilot

Voluntary Service Curbside Delivery is an innovative, first-of-its-kind, curbside delivery service for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system. This Practice distributes donated food and resources to Veterans experiencing food insecurity and/or resource accessibility issues. **The Practice was established by Voluntary Service at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center (South Carolina)** to meet the growing needs resulting from unexpected economic and physical hardships that Veterans faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Veterans receive a 7-day supply of healthy foods in addition to necessary hygiene, household, and cleaning items, delivered to their curbside location in a contactless and safe manner by Volunteer Drivers.

Veggies for Veterans is a mobile produce market established in collaboration with the Diana Gregory Foundation. **This effort works to better the health of Veterans through healthy eating, bringing a farmer's market to the HUD/VASH housing site and VA hospital in Phoenix, AZ.** This practice is focused on improving the daily lives of Veterans by providing education on healthy shopping and eating choices as well as preparing fresh produce. This program has served Veterans since inception in April 2017. *Veterans consented to have their pictures shared

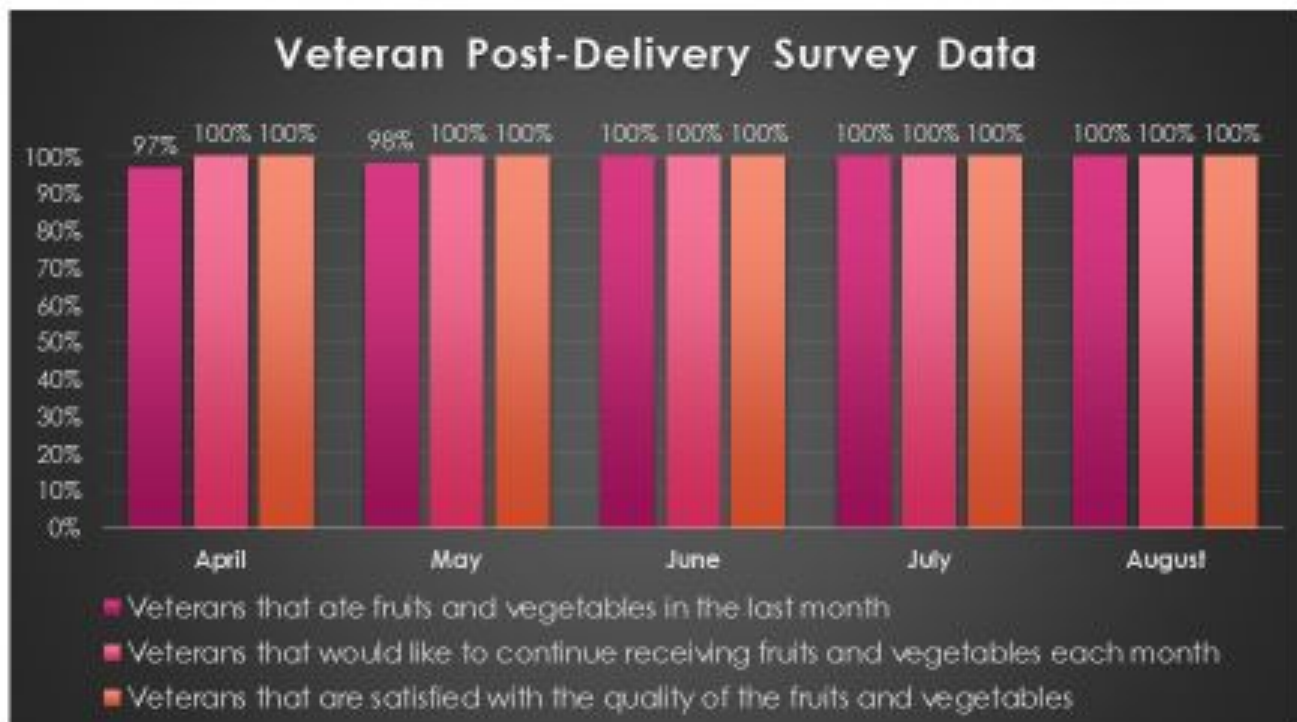


Pre-Delivery Survey Data



A total of 56 Veterans participated in the Veggies for Veterans VSCD pre-delivery survey in March. The question asked who had eaten fruits and vegetables in the last month; 49 Veterans said yes, 7 Veterans said no.

VscD April – August post-delivery Survey



A total of 60, 48, 54, 46, and 37 Veterans participated in the Veggies for Veterans VSCD survey during the months of April, May, June, July, and August, respectively.

Qualitative Veteran data

Feedback on **Veggies for Veterans**

Dr. Isabel Kozak and Diana Gregory (co-founders) in pictures



News coverage of **Veggies for Veterans** June 2021 link - flyer

- ▶ [Phoenix VA enriches lives through healthy eating called 'Veggie for Vets'](https://www.fox10phoenix.com)
([fox10phoenix.com](https://www.fox10phoenix.com))

Veggies for Veterans



9:00–10:30 a.m. Distribution to begin at 9:00 a.m. for 700 bags
Tuesday, December 6, 2022 | Carl T. Hayden Medical Center
ACC Hallway and Drive Thru



Peddler's Son



2023 Markets

- ▶ 32nd Street Clinic
- ▶ 200 Bags starting at 9am

- ▶ April 5
- ▶ June 15
- ▶ Nov 9

- ▶ Phoenix VA Hospital
- ▶ 500-700 Bags starting at 9am

- ▶ May 23
- ▶ July 11
- ▶ Sept 12
- ▶ Nov 14
- ▶ Dec 12

Nicolee Thompson- Harvest Compassion Center



Harvest Compassion Center- Tour



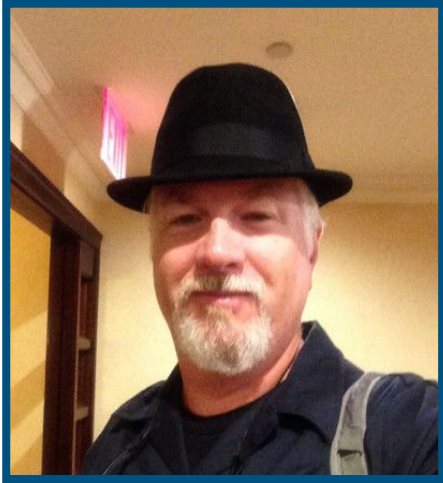
Nicolee Thompson- Harvest Compassion Center



Joan Sisco- Veterans First



Billy Gibson- Guest Speaker



Food Resources Utilized

QUESTIONS?



Session 2 Evaluation

We want to hear from you!





If you are a service member, veteran or family member
and you need support or assistance of any kind
please call Be Connected at **866-4AZ-VETS**
or visit our website at www.ConnectVeterans.org

 866-4AZ-VETS

 www.ConnectVeterans.org

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