



# EMMA

## RECEIVING AND SHARING FOOD WAS A GIFT OF HOPE

Emma, an 83-year-old Lipan Apache and Carrizo Comecrudo Indian, is also known as “Grandma” to many—even those who are not related. It’s a name of respect, endearment and cultural significance.

Emma is skilled in many arts, especially cooking. She can make a meal out of anything and loves to share. She takes her portion out, then takes it down the street to help nourish neighbors.

“I am not a rake just taking things in. I have to give back—whether it’s caring for someone else, calling to see if they’re OK, through sharing a song, my art or by storytelling.” Or by sharing her food.

When COVID-19 swept across San Antonio, everything stopped. Many people did not want to leave their homes and events were cancelled. Grocery stores were in flux as they restocked and adapted.

**“AS I SAT THERE, I SAW THE MULTITUDE  
OF CARS AND CARS AND CARS.  
MY ADVENTURE TURNED TO REALITY.  
HUNGER BECAME A REALITY.”**

Then Emma got sick with an infection. It was not the Coronavirus, but she was very ill and by herself. Friends and family came to help, but Emma lost weight and struggled to access food.

“One day, my nephew said, ‘Grandma, we signed you up at the San Antonio Food Bank.’

The multitude of people there was staggering. I didn’t know that hunger had a hold on San Antonio so deeply. As I sat there, I saw the multitude of cars and cars and cars. My adventure turned to reality. Hunger became a reality.”

**“I WAS PUT THERE FOR A REASON. I RECEIVED SO MUCH AND I WAS ABLE TO SHARE WITH OLDER PEOPLE IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD WHO WERE AFRAID TO GO OUT.”**



Emma received boxes and bags of food and bottles of water. An abundance of items for her ongoing sustenance. Emma also received hope. For herself and her neighbors.

“I was put there for a reason. I received so much and I was able to share with older people in my neighborhood who were afraid to go out. I live alone and provide for myself, but I always give to others.

**“WE ARE A COMMUNITY. WE CAN ALL CONTRIBUTE, AND ALL GIVE IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. IT KEEPS THE COMMUNITY ALIVE.”**

I think some of the dads and families and single moms in the Food Bank line, might feel bad because they think they can't provide. They're not used to asking, but it's a survival thing and the children come first.

It reminds me of a legend passed down through the years. My tribe was experiencing a great draught. There was no food, no game. The children were starving, and the parents would give theirs to the young ones. One day, the

elders went off into the woods. As the hunters went out that day, they saw an animal never before seen in that area. It was a bear. The old people had vanished and turned into a bear so the children could eat and survive.

For me, I'm a survivor. I make ends meet one way or another. I'm grateful for the Food Bank and my friends and relatives who call and say, 'Grandma, don't cook today; we'll bring you supper.'

We are a community. We can all contribute, and all give in one way or another. It keeps the community alive.”

What does Emma have to say to the Food Bank, United Way and nonprofit organizations helping provide a safety net to those in crisis or immediate need?

“Thank you, thank you, thank you. We all need one another whether we realize it or not. Our community is enriched when people stand up to help.”

*To learn more about United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County's work and to read more stories, visit [uwsatx.org](https://uwsatx.org).*