

SunLine Generates Record Donations with “Fill the Bus” Holiday Food Drive
Transit Agency’s Benefit for Martha’s Village and Kitchen a Runaway Success

(Thousand Palms, CA) – The recession may have taken a toll on the local economy, but as SunLine Transit Agency and Martha’s Village and Kitchen proved this year, it certainly hasn’t dampened the compassion residents feel toward the hungry. SunLine collected over 14,700 pounds of donated food items over a 24-hour period on November 19, during its annual “Fill the Bus” holiday food drive.

The increasingly popular event generated the largest outpouring of support in its brief three-year history. In addition, SunLine officials said the nearly eight-tons of food gathered almost doubled the amount donated last year – when the event stretched over two days. Volunteers unloaded two fully stocked, 30-foot buses at Martha’s Village and Kitchen early morning on Friday, November 20 in time for the thousands of dinners needed to feed families on Thanksgiving Day.

For leadership at the Indio-based non-profit, which serves the homeless and others in need, the goods were heaven sent. Because of the economic downturn, Martha’s Village and Kitchen has experienced a 45- 50% increase in demand for its services this year, particularly for emergency assistance.

SunLine launched the drive by parking its state-of-the-art alternative-fueled buses at four Ralph’s and Stater Brothers grocery stores across the Coachella Valley, inviting residents to donate canned goods, non-perishable food items and toiletries. Gifts were already coming in before 7 a.m., as early morning shoppers responded.

“This year’s turnout showed the kind of giving spirit that makes the Coachella Valley unique,” says C. Mikel Oglesby, SunLine Transit Agency’s General Manager. “There is nothing more gratifying and awe-inspiring than to see people, many of whom are struggling themselves, put those concerns aside and come together for those who are less fortunate. All of us at SunLine are humbled and touched by their generosity.”

Thanks to “Fill the Bus,” shelves should remain well-stocked at least through the first part of next year.

Martha’s Village and Kitchen serves approximately 500,000 meals and provides another 2700 food boxes to feed the hungry each year. In addition, the shelter delivers 500 food boxes monthly to Mecca/Thermal’s low-income Duroville Trailer Park, located on Avenue 66, in the Torres-Martinez Indian reservation.

Individuals seeking more information on the “Fill-the- Bus” food drive are asked to call SunLine at (760) 343-3456, ext. 124.