



## **Pantry Palooza participants waste no time starting the party at Skyloft to benefit Laguna Food Pantry**

By DIANNE RUSSELL

Photos by Mary Hurlbut

Pantry Palooza started at 5 p.m. on Friday night, and by 5:10, Skyloft was already packed and rocking to the Agave Bros. Friends, neighbors, and supporters of Laguna Food Pantry wasted no time kicking off an evening of good food, drinks, dancing, and camaraderie to celebrate and raise funds for the Laguna Food Pantry.

For more than 25 years, Laguna Food Pantry has been a safety net for anyone – seniors, underemployed or people out of work, disabled, students, individuals, and families – who need free, fresh, nutritious food. They collect and distribute 4,000 lbs. of food every weekday and serve 400+ families a week in South Orange County.



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**(L-R) Board Vice Chair Suriya Khan, Mastroberti, Board Treasurer Patti Gallagher, Board Member Marianna Hof, Board Member Pat O'Brien, Board Member John Kirtz, Board Chair Susan Thomas, Chair Emeritus Korey Jorgensen, Board Member Leslie Henderson, Executive Director Anne Belyea, and Board Member Cynthia Carson**

Food Pantry Executive Director Anne Belyea says, "The Pantry Palooza is typically a friend-raiser. This year, we changed things up a bit and asked for sponsors. Our community of supporters opened their hearts and their wallets donating nearly \$30,000 to help provide food to our neighbors in need. We are so grateful for the support!"

A board member for two years, Pat O'Brien explains, "The biggest challenge for us is that people don't know what we do, that we feed the working poor in the community and those who don't have money to make it to the end of the month. The end of the month is one of our busy times. We chart every day. We're feeding more people, but we also have more sponsors. We've taken off in the last two years. We have our first full time Executive Director, Anne Belyea. She has the touch. She is amazing and has the experience and warmth to carry the mission of the pantry."



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***The Agave Bros. band plays danceable rock from the 60s to current hits. In its signature style, the band recreates music from Motown, the Beatles, Rolling Stones, U2, Santana, Bowie, Pink Floyd, and many others.***

Five years ago, a friend brought Pat to the Pantry to help out. "I couldn't step away once I saw it," she says. "A high percentage of the population we serve is children. Our new concern is seniors going without food. We're working with Susi Q to address that. Some of them need rides, some are housebound."



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***(L-R) Edie Tonkon, George Heed, and Councilwoman Sue Kempf***

Two new volunteers, Tina and Zeke Lambert, just spent their first morning at the Food Pantry last Thursday. Tina says, "I was nervous at first, but then it was pretty obvious. Keep the food stocked. It was intense, but I had a great time. I was in constant motion."

With so many nonprofits in Laguna, why did the Lamberts pick The Food Pantry to volunteer their time?

"We're retired, but we owned a restaurant in New Mexico, and we wanted to do something in the community involving food, the homeless and hunger," says Zeke.





*Click on photo for a larger image*

***Tina and Zeke Lambert volunteered for the first time last week***

The Food Pantry has over 100 volunteers to back up what they do. They also work with two clubs at Laguna Beach High School. Board Vice Chair Suriya Khan says, "Laguna is a wonderful community. That's why the Pantry is a success."

Located at 20652 Laguna Canyon Rd north of the Dog Park, the Pantry is open from 8 to 10:30 a.m. Monday through Friday. It is run almost entirely by volunteers, and new recruits are welcome.

For more information, go to [www.lagunafoodpantry.org](http://www.lagunafoodpantry.org) or call (949) 497-7121.