Controversial AI data center donates $50k to Dona Ana County pantry

SANTA TERESA, N.M. (KFOX14/CBS4) —

The people behind the controversial AI data center coming to Santa Teresa are helping a local food pantry feed hundreds of families.

According to Casa de Peregrinos, a food bank in Dona Ana County, it will host a series of "Pop-Up" Pantries in the county after it reported receiving a $50,000 donation from Project Jupiter.

The first event was held on Friday morning at the Sunland Park Sports Complex, located at 4700 McNutt Rd. in Santa Teresa

Organizers explained they were able to hand out about 500 boxes of food, adding that each box can feed a family of four for about one week.

Casa de Peregrinos added that they were thankful for the donation, saying that many families in the area need help after SNAP benefits were paused and because of ongoing uncertainty regarding people being able to depend on government assistance.

According to the food bank's numbers, it went from serving 3,800 to 4,000 people a month, to 4,500 to 5,000 in October at their main pantry in Las Cruces.

KFOX14/CBS4 spoke with Casa de Peregrinos Executive Director

Lorenzo Alba, who voiced his optimism about the $165 billion Project Jupiter, saying that he believes the AI data center will be involved with the community.

"This is a great way for Project Jupiter to show that they're going to be community-oriented," Alba said, adding, "they didn't just choose this community for that project, but also for the people."

Future pop-up events are planned, including one in Las Cruces later this month.

For more information, Alba said people should visit Casa de Peregrinos' official website and follow the food bank on Facebook and Instagram.

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Project Jupiter has stirred quite the debate in the borderland.

On one hand, the AI center is expected to bring significant investment and job opportunities to the region.

On the other hand, the project has raised questions about water usage, energy demands, and community impact.

Project Jupiter is a key component of Stargate, a national pipeline project aimed at expanding the U.S.'s capacity to train and run massive AI systems.

The initiative, announced by President Trump in January alongside tech giants OpenAI, Oracle, and SoftBank, involves a $500 billion investment across the country.

In September, Doña Ana County commissioners voted to move the project forward after several public meetings.

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A month later, on Oct. 17, community members filed a lawsuit against the Dona Ana County Board of Commissioners, arguing that the county violated state and local laws when it approved the issuance of $165 billion in Industrial Revenue Bonds (IRBs) for the project and authorized Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) funding to support Project Jupiter, including anticipated permit fees.

Plaintiffs claim the county relied on a single, incomplete application from Project Jupiter's developers that contained blank and missing

pages and lacked critical information necessary to make a fully informed decision.

Project Jupiter Rendering. (Credit: OpenAI)

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