

YOUR GENEROSITY AT WORK

Grandparents Rely on Food Bank Following Illness, Job Loss, COVID

After several years of struggling to make ends meet, 56-year-old Darla thought the worst was finally over for her family.

“We’ve had our two grandchildren with us since they were real little. My husband used to paint houses. His knees got so bad to where he couldn’t hardly walk, much less go up and down a ladder all day long. I got certified so I could make a little more in office management. I found a good job, but wouldn’t you know it, I ended up with this disease.”

Darla’s incurable condition left her deaf in one ear and on medications that made her sleepy. She had to quit work and apply for disability. For a while, Jesse and Darla got by with benefits, doing side jobs, and a little savings.

Then the pandemic hit. Their grandchildren’s school closed and they lost the help of school lunches. Grocery prices went way up, stretching the couple’s fragile budget. Jesse lost his side work. A \$400 car repair was the last straw. The fragile financial stability they had known was gone.

Names and photos have been changed to respect our clients’ privacy.

 [facebook.com/FoodBankofNorthwestIndiana](https://www.facebook.com/FoodBankofNorthwestIndiana)

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www.foodbanknwi.org

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Darla is grateful for the neighbors she will never meet who donate to the Food Bank.

“If it wasn’t for the Food Bank this past year, I really don’t know what we’d have done,” Darla says with tears in her eyes. “To not be able to feed the kids, that’s scary. I mean, they don’t need toys and they can wear the same clothes for a long time. But they’re growing, and they really go through the food!”

“You have healthy stuff, fresh meat and produce. This is real food, not just junk and candy. Thank you so much.”

Darla greatly appreciates the expanded Mobile Market distribution schedule. “We have to find a ride now ’cuz however they fixed our car didn’t hold up too good.” Darla and Jesse say they’re grateful for neighbors they’ll never meet who donate to the Food Bank. “You all have healthy stuff, fresh meat and produce. This is real food, not just junk and candy. Thank you so much.”

In late 2020, Feeding America estimated that more than 50 million Americans, including 17 million children, would likely experience food insecurity by the end of the year—an increase of nearly 50 percent over 2019. ♥



Childhood Hunger Rising Dramatically

Feeding America recently released its estimates of the pandemic's effect on childhood poverty. In Northwest Indiana, the projected increase confronts us with an alarming reality:

COUNTY	FOOD INSECURE BEFORE PANDEMIC	FOOD INSECURE 2020 PROJECTED	RISE IN CHILDHOOD FOOD INSECURITY
Porter	14.1%	22.8%	62%
Lake	19.8%	19.6%	49%

Think About This.

As the pandemic wears on, too many family budgets are being stretched beyond their limits. A growing number of Indiana children are at risk for hunger in 2021.

In fact, late last year, Feeding America estimated as many as 1 in 4 would experience food insecurity in the new year.

I hope you'll agree that this number is unacceptable...that the time has come, and in fact has passed, when we must look to new ways to assist individuals and families living on the edge...like Jeremy and Jada, the school-age grandchildren Darla and Jesse have been struggling to keep fed during the COVID-19 crisis (*cover story*).

Helping neighbors of all ages who are in need right now has only been possible thanks to your generosity. **But the past year's challenges created barriers to food access like none seen in our 40-year history.** Social isolation and pantry closures were two obstacles that especially affected our older neighbors, who often rely on others for transportation to food sites.

It opened our eyes to the need to look beyond how we're currently meeting the need.

Because of you, the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana is evolving, changing, and expanding. In a very short time, we've grown into an agency capable of not only responding to

ongoing emergency needs, but also one committed to our communities' longer-term health and stability.

As new needs continue to emerge, your support is enabling us to expand our capacity to respond.

We're reaching more families with more food than ever before. We're taking the lead in a Region-wide coalition of agencies collaborating to identify and eliminate barriers that keep people from overcoming hunger. We're ramping up "wraparound services" to provide job training and social service support that fuel their self-sufficiency. New methods of connecting folks with food are on the horizon, including providing transportation to and from pantries for neighbors unable to reach help on their own.

Only together can we move the dial on hunger, for good. Only together can we reduce childhood hunger from 1 in 4 to 1 in 40...and maybe one day to 1 in 400...

Thank you for your spring gift to build healthier families and a stronger Region.

Victor A. Garcia
President & CEO





Volunteers and Donors Help Gary Pantry Overcome “Terrible” Challenges of 2020

“Something that may seem small to you goes a long way with us.”

That’s what Twyla Burks wants Food Bank donors to know. Ms. Burks coordinates food pantry services at Sojourner Truth House, a ministry in Gary that serves homeless mothers, children, and other neighbors in need of food. As fallout from the pandemic continues to challenge agencies like STH, Ms. Burks feels blessed by how nonprofits and neighbors are pulling together to meet the need.

“We love and appreciate every one of you! Whether you’re providing food, or money, or volunteering.” While many nearby meal sites shut down, STH has thus far withstood the terrible storm, with but a few small windows of closure. But it hasn’t been easy. “We have to keep thinking on our feet to stay open, change how we do things, everything from our intake process to how food is packed up and making outdoor, drive-through deliveries in a safe way. Other sites have been sending people our way, so the need is great.”

The plight of seniors on fixed incomes has especially stood out. “So many can’t get out, or are still fearful. One woman in her 80s told me, ‘I’m afraid to go to the store because of the virus. I’m down to nothing.’ It felt good to be able to give her food boxes to last a while—and also other basics like soap and toilet paper.”

Twyla calls her regular STH pantry volunteers “the best ones” in the world. “They’re so dedicated. One lady, Patricia Deneal, is here literally every day we are open, rain or shine. She loves doing intake. One day was so windy I thought we might need to put rocks in her pocket out there!” she jokes.

No donor or volunteer is ever taken for granted. Every moment of time, can of vegetables, or dollar of financial support adds up to a great blessing, Ms. Burks notes. And the community grows better because of it. Currently, the STH food pantry serves 200-275 families weekly.

The Food Bank of Northwest Indiana has served Sojourner Truth House for many years. To learn more about this pantry, visit sojournertruthhouse.org. ♥

Your Generosity Helps Forge New Solution to Hunger

Thanks to contributors like YOU and a leading grant made possible by the Lake and Porter County Funders Collaborative, the Food Bank has launched the **Northwest Indiana Hunger Coalition**.

This new association engages over 30 organizations and individuals committed to solving the root causes of food insecurity in our communities.

Ann Heiligstedt, Charitable Food Coordinator, will facilitate the Coalition’s efforts to implement cooperative strategies and solutions benefiting agency partners. *“The Food Bank has served record numbers of people in need throughout the past year, yet we recognize that more must be done. The Northwest Indiana Hunger Coalition is more than a crisis response team—it is a partnership for long-term sustainable change, and we invite you to join us!”*

To learn more about partnering with the new Northwest Indiana Hunger Coalition, contact Ann at aheiligstedt@foodbanknwi.org.





THE SOIRÉE

JUNE 13 | 2PM-5PM
FOOD BANK OF NORTHWEST INDIANA

We're Making Room for YOU: Reserve Your Place Today!

It's back! Live and in-person for 2021!
Don't miss the Region's premier annual
hunger-fighting gala. Register now
for on-site OR virtual attendance.

Being held at our spacious Merrillville headquarters—beautifully transformed into a socially-distanced special-event venue for an afternoon you'll long remember!

Enjoy music, auction, raffles, and tastes from the best local chefs, restaurants, and breweries.

Upgraded VIP experience includes a special Chef's presentation, silent auction, wine pairing, and more.

Virtual experience added for guests who prefer online participation including access to raffles and auctions, and a take-home charcuterie kit!

Don't wait. Come and celebrate our community's hunger heroes and help raise urgently needed funds for hunger relief across our Region.

Register now: www.foodbanknwi.org/soiree. To learn more, contact Amy McDunn at (219) 980-1777 x313 or email amcdunn@foodbanknwi.org.

Leave a Legacy of Hope

Be part of a better tomorrow for NWI neighbors experiencing hunger in 2021! Planning for a future gift to the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana is an opportunity to make a difference even beyond your own lifetime. The following giving options offer you tax advantages and may provide added financial benefits:

- Include the Food Bank as an heir in your will or trust
- Name the Food Bank a beneficiary of your life insurance or retirement account
- Create an annuity—a special gift that provides you with lifelong income and reduces taxes

Contact Allyson Vaulx at (219) 980-1777 x314 or email avaulx@foodbanknwi.org to learn more. ♥

MISSION

To feed people today, and end hunger tomorrow by inspiring and collaborating with our community.

VISION

A community free of hunger.

♥ YES, 1 in 4 children facing hunger is unacceptable! Use my gift to nourish our neighbors in need while working toward long-term solutions to food insecurity:

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\$1,000 \$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 \$_____

Please direct \$_____ of the above gift to the *Fighting Hunger, Building Hope* campaign.

For more information about donating, visit foodbanknwi.org

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ST _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

I would like more information about:

- Volunteering Donating food or hosting a food drive
- Giving a gift to Food Bank of Northwest Indiana through my will
- Receiving occasional email updates

My email is _____

I would like to pledge a monthly gift of \$_____.
My first gift is enclosed.

Charge my gift to: VISA MC Discover AMEX

CARD NO. _____

EXP. DATE _____

SIGNATURE _____

Please make your check payable to:

Food Bank of Northwest Indiana
6490 Broadway, Merrillville, IN 46410

Please call 219.980.1777, x311, to charge your gift by phone, or visit foodbanknwi.org/give to make a gift online.

Your gift is tax-deductible as allowed by law.

MY DONATION