

A million meals... a million thanks...

In April, hundreds of neighbors responded to a generous matching gift challenge offered by civic leaders Tom Surlis and Sue Eleuterio. The total funds, including the match, exceeded \$365,000 and are at work serving over one million meals to hungry individuals and families across the Region.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE UPDATE: As of this writing, demand for food assistance remains at critically high levels. Your continued support is needed to help the Food Bank ensure that no child or adult goes hungry in our Region during the coming months. ♥



YOUR GIFTS AT WORK IN GARY AND BEYOND...

Pantry Coordinator Expands Efforts to Feed More Hungry Families

Note: Sadly, the pantry featured in this story was among the dozen or so of Food Bank partner agencies forced to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving hundreds of neighbors without access to hunger relief.

In 2019, Helimah Bilal took over the food pantry efforts at the Al-Amin mosque in Gary. She learned of many neighbors whose needs were not being addressed.

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

 facebook.com/FoodBankofNorthwestIndiana

 twitter.com/FoodBankofNWI

 instagram.com/foodbanknwi

www.foodbanknwi.org

MEMBER OF
**FEEDING
AMERICA**

“Too many people couldn’t come to us. And I became aware of many single fathers with custody of their children who were in need. So I opened up the food pantry every third Tuesday especially for these dads. If they don’t have food in their home, they’ll lose custody, and that’s a serious thing.”

Helimah recalls one boy and father who seemed so surprised and happy at the attention they received. “The young man said, ‘I love this place. Now my dad can keep me!’”

Mrs. Bilal is grateful to Food Bank of Northwest Indiana donors for enabling her to fulfill the pantry’s mission. “Most people have **no idea** how a food basket can change lives and heal hearts.

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Pantries Face New Challenges

Agencies across the Region are turning to the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana to fill rising needs they are experiencing. Pantry coordinators recently shared some of the **hardships** caused by the pandemic — and also the **hope** they're finding, thanks to your continued generosity.

“One of the challenges we’re facing is finding funding sources to help keep our food pantry open. Our client population has nearly tripled to 165 families per month, stretching our current budget. Without your help, we would not be able to do what we are doing!”

Hope Christian Church, Hammond

Thank you for making so much more possible in these hard times...

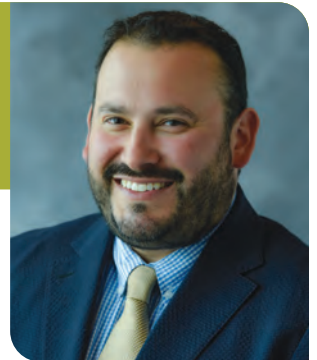
SIX MONTHS AGO, WHO COULD'VE IMAGINED HOW LIFE WOULD CHANGE FOR ALL OF US?

Fallout from the coronavirus pandemic has left no family untouched. The rate of unemployment claims reached three to four times as high as during the 2009 Great Recession. The future remains uncertain, especially for thousands of families who were already living on the edge of poverty.

But thanks to donors like you, the Food Bank mobilized an emergency outreach unlike any in our 38 year history. During the peak weeks of the pandemic spread across Indiana, the Food Bank increased both the number of people served and pounds of food distributed by over 50%. This response meant adding new outreach programs, staff, and delivery vehicles, while forging new community partnerships. Immediate operational changes were needed to keep employees, food, and clients safe.

THANK YOU from all those who've been nourished by your generosity. For as long as needed, the Food Bank will sustain our emergency response to meet the needs of children and adults facing hunger. Pandemic or not, every one of us deserves to have enough to eat.

Victor A. Garcia
Executive Director



ges, Need More Support

“Having enough food is our biggest challenge. With the increase in numbers, we run out of non-perishables, and meat. We continue to give out food on the parking lot with the help of the Civil Air Patrol.”

Sojourner Truth House, Gary

“We are up from 60 households served per month to about 100, and our shelves are getting low. We need canned goods, cereal, peanut butter, boxed goods, etc. If you have any sources for these items ... We are so thankful to our volunteers and to Food Bank donors.”

First Baptist Church, Lake Station

“The Food Bank of NWI has done a good job securing food ... we are facing many challenges: preventing volunteer fatigue and managing the crowds ... dedicated volunteers stand out in the rain loading food boxes in guests' car trunks. Operating in this COVID-19 environment of no-contact prevents us from offering other referrals and information to our guests, such as on health care, mental health agencies, and nutrition education. Availability of food, particularly of meat, is a concern.”

God's Appointed Place Church Food Pantry, Crown Point

“Café Manna has been closed since March 12. Most of our volunteers are elderly, and most of our guests are health-compromised. Thank you for the food credit, and for all you do! We hope to reopen in August.”

St. Teresa of Avila Café, Valparaiso

Please use the enclosed reply slip to send your best gift to the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana. **Every \$1 = 3 meals for a neighbor in need.** We will rush your support to the front lines of hunger, keeping shelves stocked and reopening closed pantries in conjunction with community and governmental support.

Thank you! ♥

Have you heard?



FACEBOOK
VISITORS RANK
FOOD BANK
4.8 / 5 STARS



Your generosity is enabling the Food Bank to respond to the pandemic crisis with unprecedented support for neighbors across Lake and Porter County. We want to share with you a few of the comments that clients and visitors have offered over the past couple months ...

A blessing 🙌❤️ very helpful during hard times 👍

– Dalia James

The generosity of the people of NWI is amazing.

– Bob Kullmann

A great resource when you need it. Everyone is pleasant and kind. Give-outs are very orderly and efficient.

– Dena Black

The people are friendly, they don't ask questions ... where you from ... what color you are ... they just love on you and give

– Brenda Burgess

Pantry Coordinator Expands Efforts to Feed More Hungry Families

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A simple food basket. So I would like to thank them.” She says that beyond feeding a food-insecure neighbor or family, something much greater happens, too. “There’s a healing going on, and I’m just so thankful to be a part of that.”

Helimah has also begun the Mercy Program. “I make backpacks for the homeless: filled with things to help them balance in their diet ... instant soup, fruit, condensed milk, instant oatmeal, beef jerky, and snacks. With disposable utensils and napkins.”

She and another pantry volunteer also deliver food baskets to the sick, shut-ins, disabled seniors, and women who were previously incarcerated.

♥

Mrs. Bilal feels the presence and support of her church, community, and the Food Bank. “I live by this quote of Coretta Scott King: When you are willing to make sacrifices for a great cause, you will never be alone.”

“Humanitarianism is better lived than discussed. I want to visit and assist people living wherever the need is greatest. So again, I just want to tell the donors THANK YOU for your generosity. We are in the heartland of America, and you really are at the heart of what we’re able to do.” ♥



Helimah Bilal is a member at the Al-Amin Mosque in Gary. **Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the food pantry had been serving 175 clients per month across Highland, Hammond, and Crown Point.** Bilal hopes to keep more families together by ensuring they get the food they need to thrive. “This is my calling ... I want to reach more people in need.”

three square society

Join **our growing number of members!**

As a monthly donor, you can make a bigger impact a little at a time, providing steady support for the Food Bank’s critical mission to end hunger across our Region.

\$30/MONTH provides
3 SQUARE MEALS a day for
1 NEIGHBOR facing food insecurity

Thank You! ♥

MISSION

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

VISION

A community free of hunger.

MY DONATION

♥ **YES, rush my gift to the front lines of hunger – keeping shelves stocked and pantries open for NWI neighbors in need!**

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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, ext. 311, 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.