

You Help Hurting Families Heal



Raising their three children over the years, Jason and Martha never had much extra. Still, as their retirement years drew near, they were hopeful that they'd saved enough to make ends meet on their own.

But that security was short-lived.

"Our daughter's husband had a relapse in using drugs," Martha says. "She brought her two little ones here to live. Then she got sick and had to go on disability."

The younger couple had unpaid debts, so Jason and Martha pitched in with those, and little by little their savings dwindled away. Between more unexpected medical bills and costly car repairs, the family was no longer able to get by.

"This food pantry thing's been a real godsend, I'll tell you," Jason says. "They're real nice folks. They

don't judge nobody or say 'Oh, why didn't you do this or that?' They smile at the kids and ask us how we're doing. And with what we bring home, it stocks us up enough to tie us over."

Your gifts to the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana are fueling its growing menu of programs available to assist individuals of all ages and families like Jason and Martha's. Last year, donor generosity helped create and distribute nearly six million meals through 100+ partnering pantries and meal sites, rural food distributions, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and home delivery for seniors, school pantries, and BackPacks providing weekend meals to food-insecure students.

For Jason and Martha, the monthly visit to the Lake County food pantry near their home makes all the difference. "I don't know what we'd do without you all," Martha says. "It's hard to not worry about what's gonna happen next ... so I'm just grateful for every little bit. We're just trying to keep everybody going, one day at a time. What else can you do?"

Nationwide, AARP estimates that three million older adults are raising grandchildren. In 2016, researchers found that these seniors were more likely to have their own health problems and were poorer than average. ♥

Names and photos may have been changed to respect privacy.



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Broadening Response to Hunger Relief

The Food Bank of Northwest Indiana opened in 1982 with a single focus: to rescue food that could be salvaged and deliver it to people in need.

From that humble beginning, we've grown to prominence as a hunger relief leader in the Region. Today's multi-faceted approach goes far beyond the traditional ways we've worked to feed the need — and all of it is owed to the generosity of good people like you.

Home delivery to low-income seniors in apartment communities is one of our new approaches. This effort grew out of the era of Covid closures. In addition to using volunteer drivers, the Food Bank is forging a new partnership with Door Dash to increase efficiency and our capacity to meet the growing need.

We're deepening alliances with health care providers to use "food as medicine" to not only support our neighbors who are food insecure, but also provide the specific medically tailored groceries needed in response to underlying health conditions. One example is our partnership with Franciscan Health's Prenatal Assistance Program. Pregnant women with limited income are enrolled in this program which provides wraparound services and medically tailored boxes of groceries designed to promote a healthy pregnancy. It's our way of helping to reduce infant and maternal mortality in Northwest Indiana!

Soon we'll be introducing a pilot project serving individuals experiencing homelessness through self-dispensing food lockers installed at Edgewater Health in Gary.

New efforts in **education** and **assuring equitable sourcing from and distribution of food** to people of all races and ethnicities are broadening our response to longer-term community empowerment. This spring's "Bread for the World" class invited community members to learn about systemic issues contributing to food insecurity, and how they can work to make a meaningful change for the better. Collaborating with Families Anchored in Total Harmony, Inc. (FAITH CDC), the Food Bank is expanding its capacity to source locally grown produce to meet our Region's food needs (see "Seed Ceremony, p. 3).

Your Food Bank is continuously exploring innovative ways to meet the challenging needs of our community — there is much more on the horizon for 2023! Thank you for your continuing support.



Victor A. Garcia
President & CEO

APRIL IS NATIONAL VOLUNTEER MONTH

We celebrate and thank you all!

In 2022, more than 5,000 volunteers gave 22,588 hours of labor to the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana.

It is especially inspiring to see so many volunteer teams from fellow NWI nonprofits step up to take an active role in our community.

Among some of the recent charitable organizations whose staff/student members came to sort, fill, and load food bags and boxes for distribution:

- ♥ **Shirley Heinz Land Trust** (first time volunteering at a fellow nonprofit and they plan to be back!)
- ♥ **CRYMCA** (thanks for your loyalty to volunteering!)
- ♥ **Work One** (continues to volunteer regularly)
- ♥ **Indiana University Northwest** (along with hosting a 5k run fundraiser last fall, this partnership continues to grow)

Individuals, families, schools, corporate and community teams are invited to join these energetic changemakers! For more information about volunteer opportunities visit www.foodbanknwi.org/volunteer or email volunteers@foodbanknwi.org. ♥

Teens Raise Record Support

Last month, Crown Point High School's 60+ National Honor Society members were **recognized for raising \$7,239.07 to benefit NWI neighbors facing hunger**. It marked the third year of the Society's successful fundraiser. Following two successful years of beating their \$5,000 goal, they raised their aim to \$6,000 for 2022 — and exceeded it by more than \$1,200! Five individual students earned recognition plaques for their efforts. The Society Members enjoyed ice cream during their lunch period to celebrate their achievements.

Thank You

**Crown Point High School NHS and
Faculty sponsors, Angela Taraskiewicz
and Dr. Katie Kreis**



Seed Planting Ceremony

This past fall, the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana and Families Anchored in Total Harmony, Inc. (FAITH CDC) held a Seed Planting Ceremony to celebrate a new partnership rooted in local sourcing of produce raised by the urban farm.

Funded by a \$425,000 grant awarded by Feeding America, the effort is aimed at addressing disparities in participation in the food supply chain and access to nourishing food.

The primary use of these critical dollars will be creating a freezing operation to extend the life of fresh produce grown on FAITH CDC's urban farm located on Carolina Street in Gary.

A host of community leaders, state and national elected officials, volunteers, and supporters gathered at the farm for the ceremony. FAITH CDC founder Pastor Curtis Whittaker expressed his gratitude and excitement over the innovative partnership that will address the root causes of hunger and create a more just food system.

Whittaker called the Food Bank and Feeding America "tremendous partners" in an effort that "is God's vision for us and is a faith movement."

The grant from Feeding America's Food Security Equity Impact Fund requires that 85% of awarded dollars are allocated to community partners that purposefully drive resources to organizations with historical barriers to access funding, led by and serving people of color.

"This project is rooted in the community, led by those in the community, and benefiting the neighbors of this community in Gary," said Victor Garcia, President & CEO of the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana. "This partnership ties us to what growers are doing right here in Lake County. With this investment, we are leveraging resources to build upon the strength of our area to provide for its people. We look forward to the expanded ability to source locally grown produce and share this harvest with our neighbors struggling with food insecurity." ♥

Senior Hunger Relief Matching Gift Challenge Ends April 15!

Donate to the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana on or before April 15, and a generous member of our Board of Directors will **double your contribution up to a total match of \$25,000**. That means twice the impact — an additional 75,000 meals — by which you can expand the reach to older neighbors in Lake and Porter counties facing food insecurity. Your gift will build our capacity to serve vulnerable and homebound elderly neighbors currently on our waiting list to receive a once-a-month home delivery of healthy, balanced foods.

Scan this code with your phone to give to the Senior Hunger Relief Match at foodbanknwi.org/seniorhungerreliefmatch



School-based Food Pantry Program Expanding

In 2014, Calumet College in Whiting became the first educational site whose food pantry joined the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana's network. More recently, the first K-12 school-based pantry to join was Evans Elementary School in Lake Station.

These network additions mark an important effort to reach people in need where they are.

Currently there are four school/college-based pantries in our network and the intention is to help many more benefit from membership to best stock their shelves.

Ann Heiligstedt, the Food Bank's Charitable Food Coordinator, noted, "Schools have a unique opportunity to assist student families that are challenged by food insecurity. Consistent interaction with students and their guardians gives them the opportunity to build trusting relationships that gives them an intimate view of needs within the home and provides an opportunity to help meet those needs."

"Student food pantries are an easy-to-manage way that a school can support families in a comfortable, private setting.

We are blessed with so many caring educators in Lake and Porter counties. The Food Bank welcomes the opportunity to help more schools develop pantries to assist their school families in need."

To learn more about becoming a pantry partner, contact Ann at 219.980.1777 x312 or email aheiligstedt@foodbanknwi.org. ♥



Schools can support children and their families in difficult times by being a place where children get not only the education to help their brains develop, but also food that helps brains and bodies grow.

When kids have access to healthy behavior problems. They have w/ breakfast and lunch programs at school is over for the day, many

So perhaps now is the time to c It's easy to partner with the F after the school day has ended.

Schools are a natural fit for students feel comfortable in traditional food pantries bec distribute food at the end of

Food pantries in schools ca weekend too. And by includ school pantries serve 21 m

Here are 8 simple s

Step 1 Identify adults w food from the Food Ban distribution, record

Step 2 Secure your school administration's support for the project. The Food Bank of Northwest Indiana can come to the school to present and answer questions. The Food Bank requires an agreement signed by the school principal.

Step 3 Identify the location in the school where non-perishable foods will be stored and distributed:

- Locked when not used to prevent tampering, theft or contamination from chemicals, water, etc?
- Appropriately stored - clean, dry, cool, off the ground, away from wall at least six inches?
- Is shelving needed? Do you have a cart to move food? A scale? (If not, FBNI will provide scale).

Step 4 Develop a plan and schedule for distribution: What days will you distribute? What times?

- Food must be distributed a minimum of once per month for 2 hours - and always free of charge
- Consider requiring family/student to bring referral from counseling / administration to get food
- Protect their privacy in seeking emergency food assistance, in carrying food home, etc.
- Staff with direct, repetitive contact with children must pass a national background check

Step 5 Develop a plan to notify families/students and the school community about your new pantry:

- When/how often will you share the information with the school community?
- How will you share it? Flyers? Posters? Articles in newsletter? School website?
- How will you familiarize school staff with the program so they can refer students in need?

Step 6 Consider enlisting student groups or classes to work the project. These groups can:

- Organize food drives to refill shelves in the pantry
- Students can sort and shelf foods, go through periodically to discard expired products
- Students should never distribute to other students and their families (maintain privacy)

Step 7 Monthly Recordkeeping: Maintain a simple intake form for each student, note the number of instances of service to student, pounds distributed at each distribution (FBNI will provide scale).

Step 8 Prepare to make referrals for further food assistance - pantry workers should prepare to provide handouts for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) information, Mobile Market schedules and Indiana 211 information for accessing other community resources.

If you want to help feed kids during the school year, consider setting up a pantry at your school! The Food Bank of Northwest Indiana invites you to partner with us to start yours up!

For more information about opening an in-school pantry, contact Ann Heiligstedt, Charitable Food Coordinator at the Food Bank of NWI at 219-980-1777, ext. 312 or by email at aheiligstedt@foodbanknwi.org



9/22



YES, Victor! I support the Food Bank's broadening response to hunger relief efforts across our Region. Here's my gift to feed the need this spring:

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

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 Three Square Society 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.



2210

The Soirée

An Event To Fight Hunger

MONDAY, MAY 8 | 6P-9P

FOOD BANK OF NORTHWEST INDIANA
6490 BROADWAY, MERRILLVILLE

GET YOUR TICKETS TODAY! \$75 SINGLE TICKETS OR BRING GUESTS AND RESERVE A TABLE AT \$750.
FOODBANKNWI.ORG/SOIREE

Join us for a lively evening celebrating hunger relief advocate, **Congressman Frank J Mrvan** to raise funds for families, seniors, and children facing hunger in Northwest Indiana.

The Soirée features live entertainment, a silent auction, mystery bags, themed raffles, and tastes from the best local chefs, restaurants, and breweries.

ALL PROCEEDS SUPPORT HUNGER RELIEF EFFORTS IN LAKE & PORTER COUNTIES.

Sponsorship Opportunities are available. Please reach out to amcdunn@foodbanknwi.org or 219.980.1777 x313.