

## Hunger Can Happen to Anyone *Take Action Now*

The shiny, newer model red SUV rolled up to take a place in the Mobile Market food distribution line. When a Food Bank volunteer approached to assist the driver, “Bonnie\*” began to explain.

---

“I know I drive a nice car ... it must look like I don’t need help. But my situation is so difficult.”

---

The 70-something widow had recently become a guardian for six of her grandchildren. She’s far from alone. About 2.3 million American grandparents are raising their kids’ kids.

It can feel overwhelming, as it did for Bonnie. She worries about how she’ll pay for all that’s needed. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates it costs around a quarter million dollars to raise a child to age 18 — food, housing, clothing, school supplies, healthcare, and more. That’s well over \$1 million needed for six children.

Bonnie expressed her deep appreciation for the nourishing groceries, fresh produce, and meats she receives each month. **“Every little bit helps make ends meet — I thank everybody who has a part in doing all this for families like mine.”** She knows the importance of good nutrition to keeping her grandchildren healthy, growing, and ready to learn. Bonnie is committed to making sure none of them ever has to worry where their next meal is coming from.



*Millions of America’s grandparents are raising their grandchildren, a challenging responsibility for many who live on limited incomes.*

This year, the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana expects its Mobile Market distributions to exceed 2 million pounds of food. These deliveries benefiting children, adults, and entire families take place weekly in underserved neighborhoods from Gary to Hammond, East Chicago to Valparaiso, Highland to Crown Point, and more communities throughout the Region.

As Hunger Action Month wraps up, there’s still time to make a difference! It begins with one person making one commitment to take one action that reduces the crisis of hunger. Today, we hope that person is YOU.

Donating ... advocating ... volunteering. The Food Bank of Northwest Indiana is in need of each of these important contributions. **THANK YOU** for your generous care and concern.



Scan to give! To ask about other ways to help, call 219.980.1777. ❤️

*\*Name and likeness have been changed to respect our neighbor’s privacy.*

*Names and photos may have been changed to respect privacy.*

 facebook.com/FoodBankofNorthwestIndiana

 twitter.com/foodbanknwi

 instagram.com/foodbanknwi

[www.foodbanknwi.org](http://www.foodbanknwi.org)

MEMBER OF  
**FEEDING  
AMERICA**



## It Only Takes One

**One voice. One gift. One Action.**

With so many overwhelming needs in our community, it can be tempting to sometimes throw one's hands up and say, "I'm just one person. I can't make a difference." Or, if we can't do something really big, we do nothing instead.

Hunger Action Month puts a spotlight on taking some action, large or small, to alleviate hunger. It might be volunteering once a month at the Food Bank, making one donation, or helping educate one person about the issues surrounding the hunger plaguing some 90,000 people across Lake and Porter counties.

And while it's nice to have this month to draw extra attention to the need, hunger goes on 24/7/365. **So our response must also.**

With our recent facility expansions, the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana is in an unprecedented position to take our Region's hunger relief efforts to new heights. Looking back, just five years ago we were distributing an average of 5 million pounds of food annually. Today, that number is over 7 million, with a peak of 11 million during the pandemic.

No one person can take credit for that milestone. Everyone who has ever given so much as a dollar of their hard-earned money or an hour of precious time has contributed meaningfully to this urgently needed effort.

I commend you for your passion to make a difference, for knowing that each of us is needed in this fight, and that all of us have hope and help within our power to offer, in every season of the year. Thank you!

Victor A. Garcia  
President & CEO

## "Moving the Needle" on Hunger:

**Partnership offers unique solutions to keep more neighbors healthy.**

Two years ago, the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana teamed up with Franciscan Health to provide monthly Mobile Food Market distributions benefiting patient families at its Hammond and Crown Point hospitals.

Over the past two years, more than 3,000 families have benefited from this innovative partnership.

"Our gratitude for the Food Bank is immeasurable," said Rick Peltier, Franciscan Health Foundation Executive Director. "They've provided resources and guidance to allow us to create transformational change across the Region. This collaboration has already moved the needle in our collective goal to end food insecurity, but it is only the beginning. There is more work to do. One child going to bed hungry is one child too many."

Franciscan Health Community Health Improvement Director Danielle Crowder echoed the sentiment. "Our deepening partnership with the Food Bank is combating food insecurity with and for the communities we are privileged to serve — approaching food as medicine with dignity, compassion, and joy."

Beyond partnering in Mobile Markets, the Food Bank and Franciscan Health are collaborating to provide food through Franciscan Health's Fellowship in Meal Kits and its Fresh Start Market Food Pantries, in addition to diaper distribution via Franciscan's Prenatal Assistance Programs and grant funding to support work like SNAP Outreach.

The Food Bank and Franciscan Health plan even more promising initiatives aimed at ending hunger and promoting a stronger, healthier Region for all. Your support assists with vital partnerships like this one. Thank you!



This summer, a visitor to our Mobile Market shared that his doctor recommends adding protein shakes to his diet. But after realizing that one shake a day would cost him over \$1,000 a year, the gentleman knew it wouldn't be in his budget. He was very grateful to find protein shakes among the nourishing foods offered through the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana. Adding them to his diet is a **boost** to his health that will help **ensure** he reaches the recommended protein intake each day!

# Your Gifts Helping Hungry Students Bring Smiles & Cheers, Hugs & Tears

**B**ackpack on the Go is a unique program created during the pandemic to reach more schoolchildren in our Region's school districts serving primarily low- to very low-income families. This extension of the "regular" Backpack program has a broader impact in offering nutritious snacks and meals to bridge the gap for students during weekends and holidays. Initially sponsored by a variety of funders, Backpack on the Go continues monthly, thanks to generous Food Bank donors, as well as the John W. Anderson Foundation, Jewel Osco Foundation's Nourishing Neighbors program, and the Red Nose Day campaign.

Food Bank Charitable Food Coordinator Ann Heiligstedt tells the impact she has witnessed firsthand at recipient schools.

"It is especially meaningful to thank the administrators for allowing us to provide this food for their students and tell them about new ways we hope to assist in the future. We want them to know that their sacrifices and hard work have not gone unnoticed. They are planting seeds that will bear fruit in the lives of these young scholars. I am privileged to be on the receiving end of hundreds of their hugs and more than a few tears shed. And although heart-breaking,



*"Our scholars were so excited about their weekend meal and snack bags. For some, the meals they receive at school are all they receive, so this was a welcome surprise. Even our staff members were overjoyed to help distribute the bags. We had enough to give one to every single student in our building. Thank you all so much!"*

**Administrator, Northwest Indiana Lighthouse Charter Schools**

it is also a delight to receive phone calls and emails from principals sharing how much their students and parents love receiving this vital assistance."

**Last year, more than 13,000 youngsters were served through the Food Bank's Backpack Programs.**

## Donor Gifts Help Food Bank Facilities Expand to Meet the Need

**I**n May, the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana expanded its freezer capacity again. The new container has doubled available space for large product donations, holding an impressive three truckloads of frozen foods, more than 50 tons.

The expansion capped off an era of significant improvements to its Broadway facility in Merrillville. Updates include: roofing repairs, parking lot paving, warehouse expansion, painting, tuckpointing, additional racking installed, and more.

Of course, there's plenty more to do as we seek to serve more neighbors with healthful foods kept in a structurally sound building at precise temperatures with impeccable safety and sanitary measures, ready for distribution at a moment's notice.

"We are so fortunate to have been able to complete this major freezer expansion," President and CEO Victor Garcia said. "The \$450,000 project was made possible by so many generous donations, both corporate and individual. The Food Bank offers its special thanks to David Schoon, president of Midwest Refrigeration, who provided his own dollars and in-kind work to make this a reality."

Prior to the 3,000-square-foot expansion, "we were bursting at the seams and had to turn away frozen food donations simply because there was no place to safely store it," Garcia added.

From its growing food distribution center, the Food Bank today distributes more than 7 million pounds of groceries annually to families, children, seniors, and individuals in Lake and Porter Counties through more than 110+ partner agencies, Mobile Market Distributions, Commodity Supplemental Food Program for Seniors, Backpack Programs, Pantry Pack Programs, a Job Training Program, and more. ❤️



*Logan and Melody Downs stand in front of the donor wall "leaf" honoring their contribution to support the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana's facility.*

## Kids Take Action to Fight Hunger in NWI

**L**ogan and Melody Downs are living proof that fighting hunger in our Region is not an adults-only undertaking. The siblings have taken action in several ways to feed our area's food insecure children and adults.

They pooled their savings to make a significant donation to the capacity expansion campaign undertaken by the Food Bank in recent years. Along with their parents, Matt and Heather, the youngsters regularly volunteer on-site, helping to sort and pack groceries. Logan not only participated in 2022's Hunger Hike, he won the honor of being named "fastest male runner." Melody and Logan also attended last

*Continued on page 4*



Join Us!



**ADVOCACY 200 TRAINING EVENT**  
REGISTRATION REQUIRED  
FOODBANKNWI.ORG/BREAD

**MON 10/9**  
Pick one session:  
Morning: 9am-12pm  
Afternoon: 1pm-4pm

**BREAD FOR THE WORLD**  
Porter County Community Foundation  
1401 Calumet Ave  
Valparaiso, IN 46383

**GIVING TUESDAY**  
**LAST "PACK TO GIVE BACK" OF 2023**  
**NOVEMBER 28 | 9AM - 11AM OR 1PM - 3PM | FOOD BANK OF NORTHWEST INDIANA**

**PACK TO GIVE BACK**

While making a significant impact in the community, you can also promote team building among your colleagues.

Learn more or sign up by reaching Charlie Cole, ccole@foodbanknwi.org, or 219-980-1777, ext. 314.

## HOLIDAY WORKSHOP A FAMILY PACKING EVENT

**DECEMBER 7 | 4PM-6PM | FOOD BANK OF NORTHWEST INDIANA**  
**FOODBANKNWI.ORG/HOLIDAY**

Spend time as a family helping the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana pack groceries for people in need. There are more than 25,000 children in Northwest Indiana facing hunger, and we want to ensure that they have food for the holidays. In addition to the joys of giving back, the evening will include: photo with the Santa, refreshments, games, crafts, music, and more!



The cost to attend is a donation of any amount. Sign up your family today: [www.foodbanknwi.org/holiday](http://www.foodbanknwi.org/holiday).

To learn more, contact Amy McDunn at [amcdunn@foodbanknwi.org](mailto:amcdunn@foodbanknwi.org) or 219-980-1777, ext. 313.

Continued from page 3

fall's Monster Dash.

"The Downs children are an inspiration to all of us," said Food Bank Development Coordinator Charlie Cole. "Their growing commitment and their generosity show that anyone, of any age, can make a meaningful difference in hunger relief. We are so grateful to Logan and Melody, and to their parents, for supporting them in their charitable endeavors!"



**YES**, I'll bring help and hope for the holidays!  
Use my gift to serve to nourishing meals to more families across Northwest Indiana!

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

For more information about donating, visit [foodbanknwi.org](http://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](http://foodbanknwi.org/give) to make  
a gift online.



Your gift is tax-deductible as allowed by law.