You’re feeding kids this back-to-school season in Illinois

How nourishing meals during the school day make for brighter futures

Rockford food pantry offers support a variety of ways

Area residents have a one-stop-shop in St. Elizabeth’s Catholic Community Center
FROM THE PRESIDENT

Fighting Back-to-School Hunger

As students across Northern Illinois return to school, I am reminded that there are many families in our community struggling to put food on the table. Affording healthy groceries can be a challenge with mounting back-to-school expenses. While many boys and girls may be able to access free and reduced-priced meals in the cafeteria during the school year, evenings and weekends are still times when these kids are at risk of hunger. This is unfortunate because everything we know about nutrition and learning points to the fact that all kids need good food in their bellies to succeed academically. Generous friends like you help children facing hunger thrive in school, and in life.

By choosing to support Northern Illinois Food Bank, you help us close the gap between the food parents can afford and what their kids still need to function inside and outside the classroom. For families not eligible for other assistance, our network of feeding programs can be their only safety net. Thank you so much for working with us to ensure more moms, dads, and grandparents have somewhere to turn when they have to decide whether to purchase groceries or pay for another basic expense — like rent or utilities.

As you read this issue of The Full Plate, I ask you to keep in mind that childhood hunger is a widespread problem — one that affects students you may not even suspect are at risk. It is only through your generosity that we provide our boys and girls the nourishment they deserve.

Warmly,

Julie Yurko, President and CEO

Show your support: Hunger Action Month

September is Hunger Action Month, a nationwide effort to increase awareness for children, seniors and families facing hunger. Northern Illinois Food Bank is encouraging everyone to get involved and take at least one action during the month. Whether you choose to Go Orange, Volunteer, Donate or attend an event, your actions will make a difference for our hungry neighbors.

Learn more at www.SolveHungerToday.org/HAM.

St. Elizabeth’s, Rockford

One-stop-shop

Food pantry, soup kitchen and clothes closet serves those in need

Northern Illinois Food Bank is working toward its strategic goal of providing 75 million meals to our neighbors in need by the year 2020. Look for the following icons throughout this issue of The Full Plate accompanying stories that highlight the five pillars of our strategic plan:

Build Healthy Communities

Igniting the Community

Providing More Meals

Strengthening Leadership

Maintaining Frugality and Trust

For more than 20 years, Terri Hill has devoted her professional life to serving hungry neighbors in Rockford through her work with St. Elizabeth’s Catholic Community Center, and for the last three years she has been its director. The faith-based one-stop-shop is a food pantry, soup kitchen and a clothes closet run by the Rockford Catholic Archdiocese. It offers families the opportunity to feed and clothe themselves. When asked why she has dedicated herself to the community center for two decades Terri responds matter-of-factly, “I love the people we serve and the ability to make a difference in people’s lives.”

Quick facts about St. Elizabeth’s:

› serving Rockford area families since the late 1970s
› 150 families served daily
› 135-150 individuals visit the soup kitchen daily
› diverse clientele spanning all age groups
› 2 employees and 15-20 daily volunteers

During Terri’s tenure, she has seen an increase in the number of families served by the food pantry. She attributes this increase to four factors: the economy, unemployment, low wage growth and the high cost of housing.

With conviction, Terri says that Northern Illinois Food Bank is St. Elizabeth’s “lifeline.” “We could not serve the number of people we do without their support,” said Hill. She is particularly grateful that St. Elizabeth’s can order food from the Food Bank at a reduced rate and that snacks are provided year-round for children.

When asked what makes St. Elizabeth’s unique, Yvette Sellers, Food Bank area specialist and liaison to St. Elizabeth’s and more than 60 other pantries across Boone, Ogle, DeKalb, Stephenson and Winnebago counties, immediately commends the staff and volunteers for their care and attention to guests.

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Yvette highlights the fact that this spring, St. Elizabeth’s staff chose to become a “Choice Pantry,” allowing families the opportunity to select food, versus being given a pre-selected bag of groceries—a change that has already profoundly impacted our hungry neighbors. Replicating an in-store shopping experience not only preserves the family’s dignity, but also gives them the freedom to choose their own groceries with their dietary restrictions and health needs in mind. The change to “Choice” also gives pantry workers the opportunity to better know their guests and learn which items they need.

Additionally, Northern Illinois Food Bank partners with St. Elizabeth’s through our Direct Connect and Fresh Rescue programs. Through Direct Connect, St. Elizabeth’s can pick up food directly from retailers, thereby establishing ongoing, independent relationships with participating retailers. Through the Fresh Rescue program, St. Elizabeth’s receives fresh produce secured by Northern Illinois Food Bank which is then delivered to their doorstep by a Food Bank driver.

So while the Northern Illinois Food Bank may be a lifeline for St. Elizabeth’s, it is truly a one-stop-shop pantry that is its own “lifeline” to neighbors in need in the Rockford area.
Family finds support to make ends meet

For Nancy, a school bus driver, it's not always easy making ends meet. Recently her daughter’s family moved in with her—Maria, Edward and their son, Jacob, who has autism. Even with the income her son-in-law, Edward, brings in, Nancy says there is not always enough money to keep enough groceries on hand.

Jacob attends preschool a few hours a day during the school year, and the only regular nourishment he can count on is a small snack. during the school year, and the only regular nourishment he can count on is a small snack. Nancy’s Story

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Jacob attends preschool a few hours a day during the school year, and the only regular nourishment he can count on is a small snack. Back at home, Nancy and Maria work together to prepare meals for Jacob that are filling and nutritious. Thanks to your gifts to the Food Bank, these include a good amount of nutrient-rich foods and vegetables. Having access to this food will ensure young Jacob is able to thrive inside and outside the classroom when he begins kindergarten next year. Nancy is very grateful for you and your gifts, which are preparing Jacob for success.

“People would be very hungry without this,” Nancy says. 

And although Maria offsets the cost of childcare by staying home with Jacob when he’s not at school, they still struggle to provide him with enough nourishing food, like fresh produce. Wanting to do more to help her daughter and grandson, Nancy reached out to People’s Resource Center in Wheaton. At this agency in the Food Bank network, her family can pick up the groceries they need to stretch their food budget a little further each month.

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It’s through the support of our donors that these young neighbors, along with thousands of other kids at about 150 similar sites our 15-county service area, can receive a balanced dinner — something their caregivers aren’t always able to provide because of challenging financial situations. Today, the boys and girls Ally serves are enjoying a boxed meal that consists of a turkey sandwich, milk, carrots and a clementine. After the meal, students are able to benefit from tutoring, homework help and Ally’s favorite program — nutrition lessons. By reinforcing the importance of eating right, the kids learn how to choose foods that will help them grow big and strong.

“Here, they’re learning what a complete meal is,” Ally says.

All children in our community deserve access to good, nutritious food. It’s a comfort to Ally and Randal that neighbors like you are helping kids at North Elementary and other child feeding sites across our service area excel by having access to balanced meals every day.

Solving Hunger

After school program provides balanced meals, homework help and nutrition lessons

Ally Chavez and Randal Riley work for North Chicago Community Partners, an agency working with the Food Bank to solve childhood hunger. During their career with the organization, which operates one of our school pantries and after-school feeding programs for the North Chicago school district, they’ve encountered countless boys and girls who rely on the afternoon meals they serve during the week.

According to Ally, almost every one of the roughly 60 kids who come to the after-school program at North Elementary School receive free or reduced-price breakfasts and lunches at school. The food distributed at program sites like North Elementary are there to make sure none of the children goes to bed hungry.

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Thank you to the more than 900 guests who attended our 5th annual A Taste That Matters event, presented by Jewel-Osco, on May 19. This year’s event allowed Northern Illinois Food Bank to provide more than $3.2 million worth of groceries to hungry neighbors across the 13 counties we serve!

Guests had the opportunity to sample delicious selections from 33 of Chicagoland’s finest restaurants and vendors.

Doug Cygan, event chair and Jewel-Osco Vice President of Marketing & Food Manufacturing, gave opening remarks at this year’s A Taste That Matters. Join us for next year’s event, on May 18, 2017!

Guests also enjoyed the ambient music by critically-acclaimed Jazz Keyboardist Marcus Johnson, and bid on the array of silent auction packages.

We finished the Foodie 5K season with events in Libertyville and Joliet. All together, the 2016 run/walks raised more than $1.7 million worth of food that will be provided to families in need.

This year’s Foodie 5K was more than 2,700 participants.

www.SolveHungerToday.org

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SEPTMBER
(Hunger Action Month)
Join our Neighbors Feeding Neighbors Campaign!
All Month
Take action against hunger this September and help us raise $25,000—worth $200,000 in groceries for our hungry neighbors—by setting up your own fundraising page starting August 1. Then, share your page with family, friends and other networks all month long to meet your fundraising goal!
For questions or to set up your personal page, contact Kate Thomas at kthomas@northernilfoodbank.org or call 630-443-6910 ext. 117.

Go Orange Day
September 8
Help us bring awareness to the issue of hunger during Hunger Action Month by wearing orange, holding a food and fund drive, or starting a conversation about hunger.
Check out our events calendar at www.SolveHungerToday.org/HAM for more ways to get involved!

OCTOBER
Stars and Cars
October 5
Join us at Steve Foley Bentley, Cadillac, Rolls-Royce of Northbrook for our 4th annual Stars and Cars event. Mingle with Honorary Chairs Brian McCaskey and Steve Foley and other local celebrities amongst luxury vehicles while supporting the Food Bank’s hunger relief programs.
For tickets, visit our website or call (630) 443-6910.