School Pantries: Making nutritious groceries convenient for families
D300 Food Pantry celebrates 3 years

Back to school with full bellies
Afterschool and BackPack Programs ramp up for new school year
Dear Friends,

We take our responsibility to steward the resources graciously donated to us very seriously. One of our strategic pathways is Be Trusted Financial Stewards, which means we are committed to use our resources wisely and be transparent with our supporters. We are a financially healthy organization with six months of operating reserves. We are respected for earning a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator for 15 consecutive years. This year, we will be rated as a 3-star charity which means we “exceed or meet industry standards and perform as well as or better than most charities in the cause.” The rating is a combination of our financial standing and our accountability and transparency. We feel it is important to let you know why this change will occur.

One of the areas that Charity Navigator evaluates is program growth, which for us equates to meals distributed. When we started our current strategic plan in 2014, we were providing 50 million meals and seeing year-over-year meal growth of 10-15. The good news is that thanks to YOU and our generous supporters, we are closing the meal gap in Northern Illinois—meaning rapid growth is no longer necessary. We are now providing 69 million meals annually, meeting the meal gap in more than 80% of our communities, and need about 2 million more meals to solve hunger in Northern Illinois. The Charity Navigator model does not account for this. We are proud to be accredited by the Better Business Bureau and recognized by GuideStar with a Platinum Seal of Transparency—its highest rating—for voluntarily and publicly sharing information about how we measure progress and results. We will continue to be forthright and transparent with our supporters, our network and our community. Thank you for your continued trust and support as we solve hunger in Northern Illinois together.

Sincerely,

Julie Yurko
President and CEO
Tim Heber
Chief Financial Officer

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Growing into the years ahead

THE FULL PLATE

Fall 2019

School pantries provide an easy way for families to get groceries

IN THIS ISSUE

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Upcoming events calendar: Hunger Action Month events, Stress & Care, and more!

Provide More Meals

I'm a sunny, warm day at Carpentersville Middle School—sidewalk chalk doodles are scrawled across the asphalt, coloring books mingle with blocks of all sizes in large plastic bins, and the sound of laughter from excited little voices fill the air, as children play under the watchful eyes of their parents.

These families are waiting at Door 20 of the school, but they’re not here for a band concert, parent-teacher conference, or to drop their kids off for class. Instead, they’re picking up groceries from the school’s food pantry.

Located in a former dock area that was repurposed to meet the needs of its student population, D300 Food Pantry first opened in 2016 and serves families and employees of Community Unit School District 300, the sixth-largest school district in Illinois.

“We partner with D300 as much as we possibly can, and they’ve been really wonderful to work with,” says Leslie LaMarca, President of the Food Pantry. “We are a separate entity, but they do everything they can to help us.”

Now in its third year of operation, the pantry serves an average of 80 families per week, many of whom are referred to the pantry through school liaisons and social workers.

Back in 2015, Northern Illinois Food Bank helped D300 identify a location and make plans to operate within the Food Bank’s network. The Food Bank raised funds to equip the pantry with refrigerators, freezers and shelving, and supported the pantry’s food expenses for the first full year.

Over the years, the Food Bank has been fortunate to partner with a variety of organizations to expand the School-Based Food Pantry program to serve more families. Major funders include Feeding America thanks to Conagra Brands Foundation and Morgan Stanley, General Mills Foundation, Illinois Children’s Healthcare Foundation, and Kishwaukee Hospital (now part of Northwestern Medicine).

“People love it and they feel safe here,” says Kris Korth, Pantry Manager. “The perception is really great, I think, because it is school-based. It’s for everybody.”

LaMarca agrees. “We’re creating a totally different kind of culture,” she explains. “We want families to be comfortable here, in hopes that if they feel more comfortable, they’ll come get food for their kids when they need it.”

After all, as the motto says, that’s what D300 Food Pantry is all about: “Keepin’ the kids fed!”

DID YOU KNOW?

There are more than a dozen school-based pantries in Northern Illinois Food Bank’s network, which serve more than 1,000 households per month:

• Barb Food Mart, DeKalb
• Bensonville District 2, Bensonville
• D300 Food Pantry, Carpentersville
• Family Care Closet, North Chicago
• Illiana Family Services, Joliet
• Joliet Food Pantry, Joliet
• Kendall County Community Food Pantry, Plano
• Marc Wilkinson East Community Food Pantry, Aurora
• Rockford Public Schools – Kennedy Middle School, Rockford
• SOBO Food Pantry, South Beloit
• Spartan Food Pantry, Sycamore
• Unity Kitchen, Crest Hill
• Wolfe Together Food Pantry, West Chicago

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* Based on student enrollment

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The value of food inside each backpack is determined by the USDA's MyPlate Program, which suggests children have at least one serving of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, protein and dairy with each meal. Every backpack contains all of these components, along with accompanying recipes families can use to prepare their meals.

Thanks to the support of our generous donors, the BackPack Program provided more than 725,000 meals for children across Northern Illinois last year alone.

To learn how you can help provide food to local children and families like those at Taylor Park Elementary, contact Hester Bury at hbury@northernilfoodbank.org or call (630) 443-6910 ext. 124.

BackPack and CACFP Programs spotlight healthy school years across Northern Illinois

A t Taylor Park Elementary School, Friday afternoon means something special to 15 local families – and not just the end of another week, but Friday is when their children pick up a blue backpack on wheels that is full of nutritious food to bring home for the weekend.

Taylor Park is one of a handful of schools in Freeport, and more than 180 schools in Northern Illinois, participating in the Food Bank’s BackPack Program, which provides food to supplement weekly meals for a child and their siblings. Children are identified by school staff, who recognize signs of chronic hunger or are aware of families in need, and distribute backpacks to students at the end of the week.

Marie Stott, Family Resource Coordinator at Taylor Park, shares that the backpacks distributed to these families provides food for the weekend to more than 30 children. While this may seem like a small number, the impact it makes for these children and families is enormous. And as the Food Bank, we believe that every single child should have the food they need.

The best part of our partnership with the Food Bank is that our teams can be involved in many different ways, but always with the collective goal of feeding hungry neighbors. For example, we’re able to pack food as a big group at the Geneva Center, bring small teams from other locations together locally via mobile pantries or keep the service totally in-house through our annual food drive. It’s through these touchpoints across the year that we’re able to get personally involved and have the greatest impact!

3. Do you have any favorite memories from your time volunteering with the Food Bank?

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To learn why they love being part of the Food Bank family.

To read more about each honoree, please visit our blog, The Side Dish, at SolveHungerToday.org/blog!
Thanks to all our sponsors, volunteers and nearly 2,000 participants who joined us for our annual Foodie 5ks presented by Kellogg’s that took place in Wheaton on April 27, and in Libertyville on June 1. The weather couldn’t keep the fun away either day!

In the post-race festival area, participants (and their families) enjoyed delicious food tastings from a variety of local restaurants and food vendors.

This year’s Foodie 5ks race series raised more than $3.7 million in much-needed groceries for our neighbors—proving that what YOU do truly does make a difference in our community!

Thanks to everyone who attended our 8th Annual A Taste That Matters event on Thursday, May 16 at Drury Lane in Oak Brook. Presented by Jewel-Osco, the event raised nearly $3.2 million in groceries for neighbors across Northern Illinois!

www.SolveHungerToday.org

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OCTOBER
Stars & Cars
Wednesday, October 23 | 6 p.m.
Doubletree Hotel Libertyville-Mundelein
The Food Bank’s glitziest event of the year, Stars and Cars, returns for a seventh year! Enjoy delicious food and drink tastings from local chefs and restaurants and an extensive silent/live auction mingling with local celebrities and athletes among classic cars while supporting the Food Bank. Visit www.SolveHungerToday.org/Stars or contact Kate Thomas at kthomas@northernilfoodbank.org to learn more or purchase sponsorships or tickets.

HOLIDAY GIVING OPPORTUNITIES
October-December
Make the holidays bright for our neighbors and help put food on their table this year! Donate $10+ and get a specially-designed holiday card to gift that helps provide $80 worth of groceries, donate $30 to help provide a complete Holiday Meal Box to a local family in need, or host an online food or fund drive! Call us today at (630) 443-6910 to learn how you can give what matters this holiday season!

Upcoming Activities
See our complete calendar of events at www.SolveHungerToday.org/events

SEPTEMBER IS HUNGER ACTION MONTH!

Pack-A-Thons
Help us celebrate Hunger Action Month with your family, friends and coworkers and register to participate in the Pack-A-Thon nearest you! All Pack-A-Thons consist of four 2-hour volunteer shifts each day. Register today at SolveHungerToday.org/HAM as space is limited! Contact Teresa Schryver at tschryver@northernilfoodbank.org with any questions.

Friday, Sept. 6 | Geneva
Friday, Sept. 13 | Joliet
Friday, Sept. 20 | Park City
Friday, Sept. 27 | Rockford

Pass the Plate
September 1-30 | Various locations
Support the Food Bank during Hunger Action Month and visit a participating restaurant in September to enjoy special menu options, bill discounts, special events and more that help feed our hungry neighbors! Visit SolveHungerToday.org/PassThePlate for a list of participating restaurants.

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn to find out the latest happenings at the Food Bank.
Send comments/questions about articles in this issue to communications@northernilfoodbank.org.