Solving hunger takes a village
Rochelle community volunteers together to run Food Pantry

Returning the favor
DuPage Township volunteer knows both sides of the table
Staying the course in 2019

Dear Friends,

This time of year, many of us have embarked on New Year’s resolutions, but here at Northern Illinois Food Bank, our resolution for 2019 remains unchanged from years past—to solve hunger for our neighbors across Northern Illinois. And we’re more confident than ever we can reach our goal because we have your support. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to provide an impressive 11 million meals during the holiday season alone—meals that may not have been on our neighbors’ tables otherwise. Whether your support means giving financially or giving your time—you help us provide much-needed nutritious groceries to our neighbors, who are often faced with tough choices this time of year, such as whether to heat their homes or buy food.

In this issue of The Full Plate, you’ll read how volunteers’ helping hands make it possible to serve the community every week at Rochelle Christian Food Pantry, and how your generosity helped Zully, a client-turned-volunteer at DuPage Township Food Pantry in Romeoville, buy food.

I hope you’ll enjoy getting to know our neighbors on both sides of the table—I certainly do. None of what we do would be possible without the kindness of dedicated individuals like you. You make our community stronger with each passing day—I couldn’t be more grateful to serve alongside you.

Warmly,

Julie Yurko
President and CEO

Northern Illinois Food Bank is working toward solving hunger in Northern Illinois for our neighbors in need. Look for the following icons throughout this issue of The Full Plate accompanying stories that highlight the five pillars of our strategic plan:

- **Provide More Meals**
- **Ignite the Community**
- **Build Healthy Communities**
- **Strengthen Leadership**
- **Be Trusted Financial Stewards**

Volunteers at the heart of local food pantry impact, operations

**Agency Spotlight: Rochelle Christian Food Pantry**

Kate Maehr, Executive Director & CEO of Greater Chicago Food Depository (left) and Julie Yurko (right) accept ABC 7’s annual Share the Joy donation from on-air personality Tracy Butler.

Kate Maehr, Executive Director & CEO of Greater Chicago Food Depository (left) and Julie Yurko (right), Executive Director & CEO of Northern Illinois Food Bank, to topping IL Give’s charts for Most Funds Raised and Most Individual Donors, to receiving a generous $50,000 match from the Barsema Family, we raised more than $207,000 in total! What better way to wrap up a great year than $207,000 in total! What better way to wrap up a great year than what your generosity helped provide more than $1.6 million of groceries for our neighbors?

Thanks to everyone who supported this year’s campaign—our neighbors appreciate your generosity, and so do we. As always, what you do matters—today and always.

E very Tuesday and Friday in a small town of just over 9,000, vehicles of all makes and models roll one by one into a parking lot just north of where the railroad tracks cross Lincoln Avenue. Although it may look like a medium-sized storage facility, behind the overhead door and corrugated walls these neighborhoods have come to visit the Rochelle Christian Food Pantry in Rochelle, Illinois. A Northern Illinois Food Bank member agency since 2006, the pantry serves families residing in the 234-square mile Rochelle High School District. Of these families, approximately 10 percent depend on the pantry as a regular source of groceries throughout the year.

Various community organizations collaborate with the pantry to better serve families in need, whether through a canned goods-for-service-hours program with the Ogle County Probation Department or nutrition education classes offered by the local University of Illinois Extension Office. “We’re really blessed to be here,” says Jennie O’Rorke, food pantry Board President. Almost entirely staffed by volunteers, the pantry relies on 16 local churches for the majority of the manpower behind its day-to-day operations, unloading weekly Direct Connect deliveries from Aldi and Walmart, to stocking shelves and breaking down boxes.

“Our volunteers have a kind of supervisory role,” O’Rorke explains. “We’re here to be a resource, to keep the shelves looking nice, to answer questions—that’s our role.”

The pantry’s main shopping area reflects its gratitude toward its volunteers who make fulfilling its Christian purpose possible, with a display of cut-out hearts underneath a simple message: “Volunteers are the heart of our ministry.”

Agency Spotlight: Rochelle Christian Food Pantry

**Giving Tuesday Recap** 7th annual Giving Tuesday campaign a success

We celebrated Giving Tuesday on November 27, and what an inspiring day it was! From our annual segment on ABC 7 News alongside Greater Chicago Food Depository, to topping IL Give’s charts for Most Funds Raised and Most Individual Donors, to receiving a generous $50,000 match from the Barsema Family, we raised more than $207,000 in total! What better way to wrap up a great year than what your generosity helped provide more than $1.6 million of groceries for our neighbors?

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The joy of giving after receiving

The joy of giving to visit DuPage Township Food Pantry, a check took months to arrive. expenses, especially when his disability income enough to cover day-to-day living made it difficult for them to stretch their undergo hip replacement surgery, which husband had to leave the workforce to /first view of the pantry came from the other display, and rows of bread. After all, her and canned goods, multi-tiered dessert tables, refrigerated section, shelves of cereal after receiving groceries into the car, her routine changed. For more than six months, the Food Pantry was their family’s main source of groceries. For more than six months, the Food Pantry was still comes to the pantry every week to volunteer, often passing out frozen meats. “I’m giving back,” she says with a smile. “It brings me pride and joy that we’re giving to others in need.” Her personal experience with needing help – and receiving help from DuPage Township Food Pantry is one of the many reasons, she’s glad to be there each week, helping other families get nutritious groceries when they need them most. “At one point everyone is going to need help, doesn’t matter what walk of life, you just never know when you’re going to be in that situation,” she says knowingly. “But we’re here to take care of you.”

That turning point – her last day as a client of the Pantry – marked the start of her time as a volunteer. Today, Zully still comes to the pantry every week to volunteer, often passing out frozen meats. “I’m giving back,” she says with a smile. “It brings me pride and joy that we’re giving to others in need.”

“I came back in and said, ‘Do you guys need help?’ I have a couple of hours,” she reminisces. “When I first walked in, I was embarrassed,” she admits, explaining it was difficult to reconcile her sense of pride with this new reality. But the pantry’s volunteers – some of whom she knew from their lives outside the pantry – were insistently there was nothing wrong with needing help. And help is exactly what they gave her. “My husband went back to work, and I said to myself, ‘This will be my last day coming here.’”

On the day of her /first visit, Zully filled her shopping cart like usual, with groceries including fruit, vegetables, meat, canned goods, bread and more, but after loading her groceries into the car, her routine changed. “I came back in and said, ‘Do you guys need help?’ I have a couple of hours,” she reminisces.

“After that, we started getting back on our feet,” she says. “My husband went back to work, and I said to myself, ‘This will be my last day coming here.’”

That turning point – her last day as a client of the Pantry – marked the start of her time as a volunteer. Today, Zully still comes to the pantry every week to volunteer, often passing out frozen meats. “I’m giving back,” she says with a smile. “It brings me pride and joy that we’re giving to others in need.” Her personal experience with needing help – and receiving help from DuPage Township Food Pantry is one of the many reasons, she’s glad to be there each week, helping other families get nutritious groceries when they need them most. “At one point everyone is going to need help, doesn’t matter what walk of life, you just never know when you’re going to be in that situation,” she says knowingly. “But we’re here to take care of you.”

Happy 1st Birthday!

Winnebago Community Market turns one!

Did you know that February 8, 2019 marked the one year anniversary of our Winnebago Community Market (WCM) program? Just a year after launching the wildly successful Senior Grocery Market (SGM) in 2017, we expanded it into a community-wide program to help meet the overwhelming need of families and neighbors of all ages across Winnebago County. Our initial vision—to eventually hold five distributions a week (keeping two per month for seniors only) and build out a permanent pantry space while maintaining space for volunteer projects—is already becoming a reality. We have expanded our parking lot to support the WCM’s growth, and added a second distribution each week—on Saturdays—as of December 2018.

During that first Saturday distribution, we were thrilled to serve 60 households (40 being new to the Market), totaling 103 individuals. Overall, the WCM served nearly 250 new families in December alone—a great way to wrap up the Market’s first year.

We’d like to extend a hearty thank you to all our supporters—volunteers, donors and community partners who helped make the Winnebago Community Market’s first year a success. We’re excited for all the organic growth to come in year two, and are grateful we can help fill bellies and hearts with hope across Winnebago County.

To get involved with the Winnebago Community Market, visit www.SolveHungerToday.org/volunteer, or contact Courtney Oakes at coakes@northernillfoodbank.org.

For this issue of The Full Plate, we sat down with Debbie & Steve Jones, two of our wonderful Winnebago Community Market (WCM) volunteers, to learn why they joined the Food Bank family last year.

Briefly tell us about yourselves.
D: We moved to the Rockford area 2.5 years ago after 16 years in Appleton, WI.
S: I’m a Supply Chain Manager at Mondelz, and Deb is a Certified Teacher (most recently taught pre-K in WI).

How/Why did you get involved with the Food Bank? D: When we moved to Rockford, I was no longer teaching but still wanted to give my time, so was introduced to the Food Bank by [participating in a volunteer shift with] my husband’s employer, Mondelz. This turned into volunteering on Thursdays at the WCM.

What interested you most about getting involved with the WCM? D: It’s a wonderful way to give back to the community I live in. After [our shift] labeling cans with Mondelz, it was a natural fit to continue serving here and this great cause. We enjoy helping and interacting with the people in our area.

Have you had any particularly memorable shifts/interactions with clients? S: I will always remember my first [WCM] and how busy we were for 4 full hours. I remember seeing how grateful folks are. I am honored to be able to help.

To read the full interview at SolveHungerToday.org.
In addition to food packing shifts, direct service opportunities are available at our Rockford Center, during which you serve at the Winnebago Community Market.

We welcome all volunteers ages 8 and up to help pack, sort and label food in our four warehouses.

Our name tag ball grows with every shift. It is a fun way to show that volunteers are at the core of what we do, and that what you do truly matters!

Did you know that last year, more than 25,000 volunteers—including this wonderful group of Marines—gave more than 136,000 hours of time to the Food Bank? That’s like having 65 additional staff!

Whether one shift a month or one shift a week, you can make a difference by volunteering at the Food Bank!

A volunteer shift is the perfect activity for your next corporate team building activity! Contact our volunteer team for groups over 20 people at volunteer@northernilfoodbank.org.

Tweens ages 16-18. Get service hours and gain leadership skills by becoming a Volunteer Apprentice. WOW! For more information, visit SolveHungerToday.org/Volunteer!
Upcoming Activities

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

A Taste That Matters presented by Jewel-Osco

Thursday, May 16 – 6 p.m.
Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace

The Food Bank’s premiere event of 2019 returns to Drury Lane for an 8th year! Join us for an evening of entertainment, food tastings and an extensive silent auction. To purchase tickets or learn more, visit www.SolveHungerToday.org/ATasteThatMatters, or contact Kate Thomas at 630-443-6910 ext. 117.

SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR 2019 EVENTS!

COOKING DEMO: BREAKFAST
Thursday, April 25 – 7:30-8:30 a.m.
Crystal Lake Food Pantry

Join us for a cooking demo with the Food Bank’s very own Executive Chef Jen Lamplough and learn how to make easy, nutritious breakfasts everyone will love. Register here by April 22: SolveHungerToday.org/EasyBreakfast

2019 FOODIE 5KS

Saturday, April 27 – 9 a.m.
Cantigny Park, Wheaton

Saturday, June 1 – 9 a.m.
Independence Grove, Libertyville

Join us for our 6th annual Foodie 5K season! Enjoy fun and games for the whole family at the post-run festival, featuring delicious FREE tastings from local food vendors and kid’s zone. To register or learn more, visit www.SolveHungerToday.org/Foodie5K or contact Kate Thomas at (630) 443-6910 ext. 117.