

FEEDING OUR HUNGRY NEIGHBORS | SPRING 2014

THE FULL PLATE

NORTHERN
ILLINOIS
**FOOD
BANK**

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Keeping our New Year's resolutions



For ages, people have proclaimed their plans for the next year in the form of resolutions. And yet, it is reported that 88 percent of those who make resolutions fail to keep them. Many times it takes just one small glitch to throw the best laid plan off track. Thankfully, most resolutions are not crucially important, and we simply continue on where we left off when time allows. However, when "one small glitch" interrupts a hungry neighbor's life, the results may be catastrophic.

As I write this column, we are experiencing one of the coldest days of the year with subzero temperatures and wind chills that make Alaska look like a viable vacation destination.

And while some of us challenge Mother Nature by turning up the thermostat without question, the answer to the dangerously bitter cold is not so simple for our neighbors in need. As Stacie from DuPage County told us in January, when you are living pay check to pay check, you can't afford to have an unbudgeted expense.

And so while it's no surprise that these cold temperatures will lead to higher heating costs, many of us will wince when we get our gas bills. Yet, we will pay them, and forget about this record cold as soon as the first warm day of spring appears. But for our neighbors whose budgets are already tight, the effects of the "polar vortex" may be felt for many months to come as they are now challenged with paying their heating bill or feeding their family.

"When you are in this situation, every penny counts," Stacie, whose family dressed in extra layers and monitored the thermostat to be sure no one turned it above 67 degrees, told us.

Because despite all their meticulous planning, one small glitch, one unplanned or unavoidable event, can not only take our hungry neighbors off track, but can send them tumbling.

This issue of *The Full Plate* has many ideas for keeping your New Year's resolutions while helping a neighbor in need. I hope you will join us this year in bringing hope to a hungry neighbor's life.

With your help we are solving hunger! 🍌

Godspeed,

Pete Schaefer, President and CEO



By The Numbers

Fiscal Year 2014 six month update
(July 1 - Dec. 31, 2013)



24 million meals provided in the first half of fiscal year, a 30% increase



194 Mobile Pantry deliveries of nutritious food across 13 counties



38,093 gallons of 1% milk distributed to 19 food pantries through our Milk2MyPlate program



More than 14 million meals of perishable food recovered from retail stores



84% of the food received by food bank was donated, 11% purchased and 5% came through government commodities



62,391 hours of volunteer time donated, the equivalent of more than 60 full-time employees



33,396 holiday meal boxes were distributed in November and December



Resolution: Compassion

Moving toward a brighter future

James looks through the shelves at Barb Food Mart, a school-based food pantry designed to provide assistance to families with children enrolled in DeKalb School District 428.

From the time James and Shirley were married in 2007, the challenges have seemingly come nonstop, with everything from health issues to job loss impacting their family of five.

Those challenges recently reached a breaking point when chronic migraines caused James to lose his job as a warehouse worker, setting in motion a series of events that resulted in the family losing its house in Montgomery and moving to DeKalb.

With the family in need of help like never before, a simple internet search led James to Barb Food Mart, a school-based food pantry designed to provide assistance to families with children enrolled in DeKalb School District 428.

"It came to the day where we didn't have

food, so we had to do something," Shirley said. "That's when James started going to the food pantry, and we're so thankful."

Steady income remains elusive for the family despite Shirley's best efforts to make ends meet as a sales consultant for a company that specializes in organizational products for homes and offices. Her time is also increasingly consumed with tending to James' health needs and caring for the couple's twin 5-year-old daughters.

These realities make James' weekly trips to Barb Food Mart that much more of a blessing.

"We wouldn't be able to make it without the resources we get here," James said. "We get milk, we get bread and we get cereal. And it's not just food. You can occasionally get shampoo and gels."

James and Shirley's story is not uncommon in DeKalb County, where 13.9 percent of the

population faces food insecurity according to Feeding America's 2013 Map the Meal Gap study.

James and Shirley often went to bed hungry last summer as they struggled to meet their financial obligations. That changed when they discovered Barb Food Mart, which is providing a major boost on the family's road back to financial stability.

"There was a lot going on that basically made a situation where everything snowballed," Shirley said. "We're just trying to rebuild and get out of the hole by paying our bills on time. And by paying our bills on time, that leaves no money for food. That's why we are going to the pantry."

"I really am so appreciative that food is a stress we've been relieved of to focus on the things that will help us to recover and to move forward." 🍌

Northern Illinois Food Bank turns every \$1 donated into \$8 worth of groceries for hungry neighbors like James and Shirley. To donate, log onto www.SolveHungerToday.org or return your donation in the envelope provided in this newsletter.

Resolution: Be grateful

Response to tornado relief provides hope

Every day we at Northern Illinois Food Bank have something for which to be thankful. It takes a community to feed our hungry neighbors, and every donation of food or funds, every volunteer at our centers and at our feeding partners, and every person who mentions our work to a friend or colleague helps us move closer to solving hunger in our community. We are grateful each day for the support of our network of donors and supporters.

And some days, we are truly amazed by the kindness you, our loyal supporters, provide. When tornadoes roared through

central Illinois on a Sunday in November, damaging homes in our service area of Grundy and Will Counties, and destroying the town of Washington, Ill., which is served by our sister food bank in Peoria, our hungry neighbors found hope in the generosity of supporters locally and throughout the nation, who responded to our call for help.

Thanks to that generosity, truckloads of food were immediately sent to the Coal City and Diamond area to ensure our neighbors had access to food in their time of need. We continue to assist the Peoria Area Food Bank by storing food donations earmarked for their communities until they

have the space to take them, and we have committed to send additional food their way if needed.

The outpouring of support will also allow us to continue providing more food to the affected areas throughout the next year. As the rebuilding process begins, we anticipate the need for food assistance will continue to be strong as budgets are stretched to replace items lost in the storm and the task of refurbishing homes takes its toll. As a result, we are working with partner food pantries that were in the path of the tornado to build their capacities for distributing more food and serving more hungry neighbors. These efforts are designed not to just provide temporary support, but to strengthen the community for the long term.

Because after every storm there is a rainbow of hope for a better tomorrow, and for that we are grateful. ♦

► Individuals, organizations, companies and families with children age 8 and older are welcome to volunteer at any of our three Centers. To learn more, log onto www.SolveHungerToday.org/Volunteer.



Resolution: Get involved

MULTIPLE WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

When Bill Bushnell retired from his career as an engineer in the fall of 2012, his search for volunteer opportunities led him to Northern Illinois Food Bank. Fast forward to the present and Bill is a fixture at the food bank's West Suburban Center in Geneva, where he spends most Wednesdays donating his time in a number of different capacities.

A typical shift for Bill begins in the morning as he helps out in the office by conducting research and organizing spreadsheets that keep track of the different volunteer groups that pass through the food bank's doors. In the afternoon he makes his way to the packing room where he meets up with a group of friends to handle the more traditional duties of a food bank volunteer such as packing, sorting and inspecting donated food.

"It's kind of a busy day, but I enjoy it," said Bill, pictured kneeling in inset photo. "There is some mental work in the morning and some physical stuff in the afternoon, so it's a nice variety."

Volunteers make up the backbone of Northern Illinois Food Bank, where last year 14,000 volunteers donated 105,000 hours of their time. That

translates to the equivalent of 50 full-time employees.

The food bank is always in need of weekday volunteers, offering a perfect opportunity for anyone looking to fulfill a New Year's resolution to give back to the community. There are a wide variety of ways to get involved, from sorting and inspecting food donations to repacking bulk cereal and pasta into family-size portions, from answering phones and greeting guests to lending specialized assistance on a project or serving on a special event committee.

Like Bill, Cinda Bartz quickly found different ways to assist the food bank after starting as a volunteer at our North Suburban Center just over a year ago. What began as a two-hour afternoon shift spent with friends packing and sorting food has expanded to Cinda spending most Tuesday mornings in the office helping with data entry before volunteering in the warehouse.

"I keep doing it because it is a worthy cause, and everyone you work with is so friendly," Cinda said. "It's always fun to work with other people and see everyone pulling together to help solve the problem of hunger here in Lake County." ♦





Members of several local Rockford-area social service agencies pack boxes at the Northwest Center for distribution at the 700 Celebration.



Corporate and Foundation assistance allows the food bank to expand its reach into high-need communities. To learn how your organization can help, contact Hester Bury at 630-443-6910, ext. 124 or hbury@northernillfoodbank.org



Foodie 5K promises fun for all ages

Maintaining New Year's resolutions isn't always easy, so let Northern Illinois Food Bank help keep your goals on track.

The Foodie 5K presented by Athletico will take place at 9 a.m. on Saturday, April 12 at Cantigny Park in Wheaton. Whether your resolutions involve fitness, helping feed our hungry neighbors or both, the event offers a perfect opportunity for some exercise in a family-friendly environment while aiding a good cause.

Organized to benefit Northern Illinois Food Bank, the Foodie 5K is a chip-timed fun run/walk open to all ages. Awards will be presented to the top male and female finishers in each age group, but there is plenty of incentive to participate even if you're not intent on setting a new personal-best time.

The event includes a post-run festival with music, food trucks (Babycakes, Cupcakes for Courage, Kona Ice, Toasty Cheese), activities for kids sponsored by My Gym and a special appearance by Ozzie of the Kane County Cougars. All registered participants will receive a \$2 Food Truck voucher to be used at the post-run festival and a ticket voucher for any 2014 Kane County Cougars home game.

All participants are encouraged to fundraise. All funds will benefit Northern Illinois Food Bank, where \$1 donated can provide \$8 worth of groceries to a neighbor in need. Fundraising incentives range from a stainless steel water bottle to a chance to win domestic airline tickets.

The registration fee is \$35.
There will be no registration the day of the race.

Register at www.SolveHungerToday.org/Foodie5K



Resolution: Work together

700 Celebration boosts Rockford community

Worrying about where the next meal will come from is only one of the concerns facing our hungry neighbors, which is why Northern Illinois Food Bank is excited when there are opportunities to partner with other social service agencies in helping build bridges to self-sufficiency for individuals and families in need.

One such initiative is the 700 Celebration, an event aimed at serving low-income families in Rockford during the holiday season. The

event gets its name from the organizer's goal of helping 700 households.

Brandon Russell, associate minister at New Zion Missionary Baptist Church, came up with the idea of providing residents with a "celebration of community" by bringing nearly two dozen nonprofit groups together to provide services and information to community members in need. While the atmosphere was festive, unlike a traditional holiday give-away, the 700 families in attendance at this third-annual event had the opportunity to speak with

representatives from local agencies that could assist with needs such as housing, food, job training and utility assistance.

"We not only want to provide clothing, food and presents for the children, but also provide resources in areas like housing and financial help," Brandon explained. "By looping in so many local organizations, it shows our community that we are willing to work hand in hand, and side by side to rebuild, repair and rejuvenate our city."

With funding support from the Rockford Housing Authority and Tripura Foundation, Northern Illinois Food Bank was able to provide every household attending with two boxes of food and a box of fresh apples.

To the families receiving food boxes at the 700 Celebration, the assistance meant more than a meal.

"The community should get together to do this more often," one mother from Rockford said. "This really is a blessing." 🍏

Resolution: Networking

A Taste That Matters

There will be no shortage of flavors to whet the appetite at the third annual A Taste That Matters: A Culinary Event presented by Meijer.

The event kicks off at 6 p.m. on Thursday, May 8 at Drury Lane in Oakbrook Terrace and

features tastings from some of Chicagoland's finest restaurants. A silent auction is also part of the fun on a night where attendees can mix and mingle with other professionals who share the same charitable passion.

Last year, A Taste That Matters raised over \$369,000 to provide meals for our hungry neighbors. Sponsorship opportunities are available.



Contact Shannon Thompson at 630-443-6910 ext. 125 or sthompson@northernillfoodbank.org to find out how you can get involved.



YOU MATTER TO US!

In this issue we feature Meijer, a partner in Northern Illinois Food Bank's Food Recovery Program and the presenting sponsor for this year's A Taste That Matters: A Culinary Event. In 2013, Meijer donated more than 278,000 pounds of food to Northern Illinois Food Bank. Answering our questions is Maureen Mitchell, Meijer's Market Director, North Chicago-Western Region, pictured packing Holiday Meal Boxes above, far right. Maureen also serves on Northern Illinois Food Bank's board of directors.

How did Meijer get involved with Northern Illinois Food Bank? Meijer has a strong belief in community involvement and helping to serve the communities where we have stores.

In what capacities does Meijer support the food bank? Meijer participates in weekly store pickups of product that go directly to the food bank. The company has also supported the food bank's transportation department with donations of tractor trailers that are used for food pickups, and provides the food bank with Meijer gift cards to help purchase proteins and other products to feed hungry neighbors. Meijer also participates in volunteering events with store teams.

Why does Meijer support the food bank? Meijer's support stems from the strong belief of helping and serving the communities where our teams and customers live and work. It's the right thing to do!

What are your favorite food bank moments? The team building that comes from the volunteering events, and knowing that we are helping others in the communities that we serve at store level. 🍏



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Upcoming Activities

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

MARCH

Planned Giving Seminar

March 19 (6 p.m.)

Northern Illinois Food Bank is hosting a complimentary educational program "Wills vs. Trusts – which is better for you?" The event will be beneficial for anyone interested in protecting their family from confusion, complications and legal fees. Light hors d'oeuvres will be provided. Sign up at www.SolveHungerToday.org/Wills.

Location: West Suburban Center, Geneva

Volunteer Theme Night: St. Patrick's Day - Wear Green!

March 25 (6-8:30 p.m.)

Register at www.SolveHungerToday.org/volunteer

Location: West Suburban Center, Geneva

APRIL

Foodie 5K presented by Athletico

April 12 (9 a.m.)

Chip-timed fun run/walk. Post-race festivities include awards, entertainment, food trucks, a kids' zone and vendor booths. For more information and to sign up visit www.SolveHungerToday.org/Foodie5K.

Location: Cantigny Park, Wheaton

Volunteer Theme Night: Super Hero Day

April 24 (4:30-6:30 p.m.)

Register at www.SolveHungerToday.org/volunteer

Location: West Suburban Center, Geneva

MAY

A Taste That Matters presented by Meijer

May 8 (6-10 p.m.)

Features food tastings from some of Chicagoland's finest restaurants and a silent auction. Sponsorship opportunities are available.

Location: Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace

Volunteer Theme Night: Western

May 20 (6-8:30 p.m.)

Register at www.SolveHungerToday.org/volunteer

Location: West Suburban Center, Geneva

JULY

Northern Illinois Food Bank's Inaugural Pack & Give Back

July 19

Teams will sign up to compete against others to pack food for distribution to hungry neighbors. Event will include music, food, entertainment, prizes and more.

Location: West Suburban Center, Geneva



"Like" us on Facebook to find out the latest happenings at the food bank.

Send comments/questions about articles in this issue to ejacobsen@northernillfoodbank.org

