IN THIS ISSUE

Reaching families
Community partnerships help School Pantry Program expand

Healthy eating made fun
New nutrition program gets kids involved
Helping kids eat healthy

Monthly Giving

Serving hope to hungry neighbors

W

hile the New Year in full swing, many of us are working hard to maintain our New Year's resolutions to incorporate healthier foods into our diets. The outlook is no different at Northern Illinois Food Bank, where we hope to increase the amount of nutritious food we distribute to hungry neighbors in 2015. Maintaining a healthy diet is important at any age, but teaching healthy eating habits to children can have long-lasting effects. As a mother of four, I know that getting kids to eat their vegetables isn’t easy. This is why I am so excited about a new Food Bank program profiled in this edition of The Full Plate that is designed to teach kids about nutrition by getting them involved in the preparation of healthy snacks.

Sadly, knowledge about nutrition doesn’t necessarily provide a full tummy for the 1 in 5 children facing hunger in northern Illinois. For families struggling to make ends meet, healthy food can be unaffordable. This is why making sure children and all our hungry neighbors have access to the nutritious food they need to grow, thrive and succeed is at the center of what we do here at Northern Illinois Food Bank.

Last year our child nutrition team delivered more than two million meals through our BackPack Program. After-School Feeding Program, Summer Feeding Program and Back-to-School Fairs. In this newsletter issue you will learn how a new school-based food pantry is helping families in West Chicago, and how our response during a four-week teacher’s strike helped parents in Waukegan provide meals normally covered by their children’s school breakfast and lunch programs.

Your support of Northern Illinois Food Bank shows you care deeply about helping hungry children. March is National Nutrition Month, a perfect time to spread the word among your family and friends about the work Northern Illinois Food Bank is doing to help boys and girls in need.

And while we’re on the subject of healthy lifestyle, we encourage everyone to join us for the second annual Foodie 5K fun run/walk. The event was such a success last year that we have expanded to three dates and locations in 2015, so come on out and work toward your fitness goals while helping hungry neighbors.

Warmly,

Julie Yurko, president and CEO

Monthly Giving

Serving hope to hungry neighbors

Hungry is a year-round issue for the 600,000 people who rely on Northern Illinois Food Bank annually. In fact, the Hunger in America 2014 study indicates that hungry neighbors visit our network of community food pantries and feeding programs on average eight times per year.

Making an impact throughout the year is made easy through Serving Hope, Northern Illinois Food Bank’s monthly giving club. Knowing we can count on your gifts allows the Food Bank to plan ahead and ensure our hungry neighbors can depend on us whenever they need food.

A donation of $20 a month provides a monthly food box to a hungry senior who is unable to visit a pantry. A donation of $50 a month provides a food-filled backpack to feed three children every weekday of the school year, and $100 a month provides enough groceries to feed a family of four at year long.

At Northern Illinois Food Bank, 97 percent of our resources food programs that help feed our hungry neighbors. Help us work toward our goal of providing every meal, every day, to every hungry neighbor by becoming a monthly donor today.

W

ith two shopping bags filled with food at her sides, Teresa takes a moment to reflect on how grateful she is to have the new We Go Together Food Pantry in her neighborhood.

“This is very convenient because it is right down the street from my house, and the people are very nice,” Teresa said. “Feeling smiling faces always helps, and this food makes a big difference because we can barely pay the bills.”

Hungry neighbors like Teresa, her husband and two sons represent the West Chicago families that Northern Illinois Food Bank’s newest school-based food pantry is intended to help. Located in a classroom at Leman Middle School, the pantry is open every Tuesday evening to families with students in West Chicago Elementary School District 33 and district staff.

The pantry is the result of a strong partnership between the Food Bank and We Go Together for Kids, a community organization run through District 33 that supports the health, safety and well-being of students and their families.

The partnership began with We Go Together For Kids hosting regular Mobile Pantry distributions and bringing the Food Bank’s BackPack Program to the district. Recognizing the need for even greater food assistance in the community, We Go Together for Kids and District 33 worked with the Food Bank to open the fourth school-based food pantry in the Food Bank’s network, joining similar programs in Belvidere, Dekalb and North Chicago.

“This food pantry is about us really coming together to take good care of all of our families,” said Marjory Leewie-Brady, We Go Together for Kids director of partnerships. “Our families don’t have to stress because they know we are here to provide help and support.”

Turning a classroom at Leman Middle School into a food pantry was made possible thanks to support from Morgan Stanley, General Mills and Illinois Children’s Healthcare Foundation. Funding from Morgan Stanley and General Mills helped We Go Together Food Pantry pay for two freezers, two coolers, electrical work and industrial shelving. Funding from Illinois Children’s Healthcare Foundation will provide fresh milk and nutritious food, as well as dental kids, for children.

Food Bank staff assisted with months of hard work that culminated on Nov. 18th with We Go Together Food Pantry’s grand opening celebration as families and representatives from throughout the community gathered for a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

School pantries represent trusted, convenient locations for families in need, and the opening of We Go Together Food Pantry marked another important step for the Food Bank in its quest to provide every meal, every day, for every hungry neighbor.

“Northern Illinois Food Bank has an aggressive goal of distributing 75 million meals by 2020, and school pantries are a big part of our plan,” said Julie Yurko, president and CEO of Northern Illinois Food Bank. “It all starts with partnership, and We Go Together For Kids is an extraordinary partner. Partnerships like this illustrate that our value is maximized when we all come together to help the community.”

Funding from corporations and foundations help make Northern Illinois Food Bank’s School Pantry Program possible. For more information, contact Hester Bury at 630-443-6910 ext. 124 or hbury@nordernflfoodbank.org.

Reaching Families

Partnerships help School Pantry Program expand
Paula’s Story

Pantry’s support provides path to brighter future

Being resourceful with food is important to someone like Paula, who we met during a visit to the food pantry at Kankakee County Community Services, Inc. As Paula made her way through the food pantry’s shelves, she was delighted when she came across cans of tuna. “When you’re in a pinch, you can really rely on tuna,” Paula said. “We make all kinds of stuff with tuna, like tuna helper, tuna and crackers, tuna salad, tuna noodle casserole...”

Her voice trails off as she picks up a whole frozen chicken, which leads her to list off the many types of chicken dishes she can make with items she receives from the pantry. “Paula is taking classes at Kankakee Community College with hopes of becoming a registered nurse. Her income consists of a monthly social security payment and $15 per month in SNAP benefits. “If it wasn’t for the food pantry, we wouldn’t eat because I simply can’t afford it,” Paula said. “Between expenses for school, gas money and sometimes child care, there is barely any money left over. All of my social security money goes for the rent and monthly bills like the car payment and insurance.” Paula is like many hungry neighbors served by Northern Illinois Food Bank who face difficult choices. Based on statistics gathered in the Hunger in America 2014 study, her household is among the 69 percent that have to choose between paying for food or transportation. For Paula, KCCSI represents more than just a place to receive food. She recently completed a life skills class through KCCSI, and the organization also helped her enroll for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). As Paula continues on the path to self-sufficiency, she is grateful to have such a valuable resource in her community. “Initially when I moved to Kankakee, I wasn’t aware of all the things that are offered here,” Paula said. “I had left an abusive relationship and was left with nothing...and this place is what got me through. Between the pantry and the other social services, little by little I got me back together, got a place for my family to live, get a good vehicle and get myself into school, but it was all a process.”

Your donation of $1 provides $8 worth of food for a neighbor in need like Paula. To donate, visit www.SolveHungerToday.org or return your donation in the envelope provided in this newsletter.

Community Partnerships

Supporting families in time of need

Being ready with a response when hungry neighbors face unexpected challenges is important for Northern Illinois Food Bank and its network of community food pantries and feeding programs. This commitment was in action last October during the Waukegan Public School District 60 strike. The strike lasted four weeks, meaning the nearly 17,000 students served by District 60 did not have access to the breakfast feeding programs.

For information about foundations partnering with Northern Illinois Food Bank, contact Hester Bury at 630-443-6910 ext. 124 or hbury@northernilfoodbank.org. For information about giving through a family foundation or trust, contact senior development officer Gina Gramarosso at 630-443-6910 ext. 130 or ggramarosso@northernilfoodbank.org.

Gifts from foundations and trusts help Northern Illinois Food Bank respond to the needs of our hungry neighbors throughout the year. For information about giving through a family foundation or trust, contact senior development officer Gina Gramarosso at 630-443-6910 ext. 130 or ggramarosso@northernilfoodbank.org.

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Paula’s Story
Tell a kid to eat a piece of broccoli or cauliflower, and you’re likely to get a scrunched up nose at best. Ask the same boy or girl to take part in the preparation of a snack or meal that incorporates broccoli and cauliflower, and the response will likely be much more positive.

This is the idea behind a new nutrition education program developed by Northern Illinois Food Bank. Made possible by a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois, the program involves a series of lesson plans geared toward helping children learn about nutrition while taking part in the food-preparation process.

Last year the program was piloted at two after-school programs that receive food from Northern Illinois Food Bank in DeKalb and West Chicago, and the results were affirming. “What we found is that preparing the snack is what gets the kids engaged,” said Kelly Brasseur, Northern Illinois Food Bank’s registered dietitian. “Just standing there and telling them to try a vegetable doesn’t work.”

The program’s genesis is rooted in data Northern Illinois Food Bank collects on what types of food children typically avoid at after-school feeding programs. Healthier items like hummus, egg salad, tuna salad and pasta salad with vegetables frequently came up on the list, so Kelly and her team set out to develop a way to educate children about these foods.

To help with the project, the Food Bank turned to chef Jennifer Lamplough. An author of several cook books published for people with diabetes, Jennifer has appeared on Food Network and recently joined Northern Illinois Food Bank as its director of nutrition programs. “Little kids like good, healthy food,” Jennifer said. “I think people underestimate them and think they’re only going to eat mac and cheese and chicken nuggets. If we get them involved in making food, they are going to be much more likely to try it because it’s good. But the whole challenge is getting them to try it.”

Jennifer worked closely with representatives from the Food Bank and students from Northern Illinois University’s nutrition program to develop four simple lesson plans designed for children in elementary school. Lesson plans differ each week to highlight a vegetable and include cooking demonstrations.

Jennifer was not only hands on in developing the lessons, but she also taught the four-week program at one of the sites. In Week 1 the lesson called for making dip cups, followed by salad in Week 2, veggie boats in Week 3 and veggie wraps in Week 4.

“If the salad week, which I thought was going to be the least popular week, ended up being the most popular,” she said. “We made an Italian dressing where the kids shook together all the vinaigrette ingredients. So many of the kids said they really liked it.”

The 15-minute lessons are now available for anyone to use. Included in the toolkit provided by Northern Illinois Food Bank are lesson instructions and educational materials that correspond with each lesson.

“Little kids like good, healthy food.”

—Jennifer Lamplough, Northern Illinois Food Bank director of nutrition programs

If you are interested in using our toolkit to present Northern Illinois Food Bank’s nutrition education program to a group of children in your community, contact child nutrition programs specialist Elizabeth Koselka at ekoselka@northernilfoodbank.org or 630-443-6910 ext. 170.
**FOODIE 5K**

**TRIPLING THE FUN IN 2015**

The Foodie 5K is not only back by popular demand this year, but it is expanding to three locations! Join Northern Illinois Food Bank for its second annual fun run/walk featuring a post-run festival with entertainment, food trucks and activities for kids. The event is perfect for families, friends, community groups and corporations looking to create a team and fundraiser for the Food Bank.

Last year’s inaugural Foodie 5K at Cantigny Park in Wheaton sold out four weeks before the race date and was a smashing success as more than 1,200 participants helped raise $100,000 for Northern Illinois Food Bank. The Foodie 5K returns to its DuPage County roots at Cantigny Park this year on Saturday, April 11. The event makes its debut in Lake County on May 9 at Adler Park in Libertyville and takes a spin in Will County on Oct. 3 at Chicagoland Speedway in Joliet, offering the unique opportunity for participants to run and walk on the 1 Smile race track. The Foodie 5K is a chip-timed fun run/walk open to all ages. All registered participants will receive a bib, a $2 food truck voucher to be used at the post-race festival and more. Food trucks that have committed are BabyCakes, Chicago Pizza Boss, Cupcakes for Courage, Fat Shanty, Grill Chasers, The Slide Ride, Toasty Cheese and Yum Dum. All participants are encouraged to fundraise, and a wide range of fundraising incentives are available. All funds will benefit Northern Illinois Food Bank, where $1 donated can provide $8 worth of food to a neighbor in need. Registration for each race is $35, with an early-bird discount of $30 available through March 2 for the DuPage County race, April 6 for the Lake County race and Sept. 1 for the Will County race. There will be no registration the day of the race. Volunteers are needed at all three locations. Sign up at www.SolveHungerToday.org/Foodie5K.

Register at www.SolveHungerToday.org/Foodie5K

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**Walmart State Grant makes major impact**

Northern Illinois Food Bank is a grateful recipient of a $150,000 Walmart State Grant. The Food Bank wasted no time putting the grant to work after receiving the $150,000 in funding last summer. The grant allowed the Food Bank to purchase a new semi-tractor and six assorted pallet jacks.

The semi-tractor is outfitted with a distinctive orange cab and is helping the Food Bank safely transport much-needed nutritious food to community food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and youth and senior feeding programs across 13 northern Illinois counties.

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**Celebrity support**

Amy Rowlett of TLC’s hit show “Little People, Big World” spent the afternoon of Dec. 8 at our West Suburban Center in Geneva as part of TLC’s Season of Giving. Amy and 30 of her fans from the area toured the facility and volunteered by sorting and packing potatoes and cranberries for our hungry neighbors. The group packed the equivalent of 4,230 meals!

“I was honored to have the opportunity to work alongside my TLC family, Feeding Illinois’ amazing group of really enthusiastic local area residents to help package holiday meals and assist in alleviating hunger at Northern Illinois Food Bank,” Amy said. “It was so inspirational to see folks working together for a good cause and a great reminder of the difference we can make by lending a hand in our local community.”

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**A home run for hungry neighbors**

Thank you to Mariano’s, Curtis Granderson’s Grand Kids Foundation and everyone who donated to the Grand Giving campaign to support our mission of feeding our hungry neighbors. The campaign, which was held in Mariano’s stores throughout the Chicago area, raised $21,000 for Northern Illinois Food Bank, which translates to more than $165,000 worth of food for hungry neighbors.

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**Northern Illinois Food Bank’s Northwest Center has a new home**

The Food Bank’s Northwest Center recently moved from Loves Park to 765 Research Parkway in Rockford. Located off U.S. Route 20, the new location provides convenient access for the Food Bank’s food donors and local pantries and feeding programs. The Rockford location also provides a larger volunteer area, allowing a greater number of groups, families and individuals to engage in the Food Bank’s mission.

Volunteer opportunities and meeting spaces are available at our Northwest Center on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Individuals and groups interested in volunteering can register at www.solvehungertoday.org/volunteer.

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Volunteer opportunities and meeting spaces are available at our Northwest Center on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Individuals and groups interested in volunteering can register at www.solvehungertoday.org/volunteer.
Our sincere thanks to everyone who attended the 2nd Annual Stars and Cars presented by Fifth Third Bank at Greenbelt Cultural Center in North Chicago. The event raised nearly $95,000 for Northern Illinois Food Bank!

Special thanks to Brian McCaskey, Chicago Bears vice president of business development, for serving as the Stars and Cars honorary chair.

Stars and Cars featured classic automobiles from Steve Foley Rolls Royce and Northshore Sportscars, local celebrities and tastings from top restaurants.

Northern Illinois Food Bank’s Young Professionals Board enjoyed a busy fall, hosting two events that raised more than $9,000 for the Food Bank.

The Young Professionals Board’s second annual Strike Out Hunger bowling fundraiser took place in October at St. Charles Bowl. The event also featured a silent auction and raffle.

The Young Professionals Board’s inaugural Night Out To End Hunger was held in September at the Vino Cellars in Lombard. The event included wine and beer tastings, live jazz music, a silent auction and raffle.

Stars and Cars was made possible thanks to Fifth Third Bank, Graiger, Nicor Gas and other generous supporters.

We hope to see everyone at the 3rd Annual Stars and Cars! The event will be held May October at Steve Foley Rolls Royce.

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

A Taste That Matters
MAY 21
Join Northern Illinois Food Bank and Jewel-Osco for an amazing night of tastes from some of Chicagoland’s finest restaurants at the fourth annual A Taste That Matters. An extensive silent auction is also part of the fun on a night where attendees can mix and mingle while giving back to help provide meals for our neighbors in need. Sponsorship opportunities are available. For more details, contact Tiffany King at 630-443-6910 ext. 136 or tking@northernilfoodbank.org.
Location: Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace

MARCH
Estate planning seminars
Tomorrow’s Harvest Society is hosting complimentary seminars on estate planning in Deerfield and Geneva, presented by Ted Kuczek, Law Firm of Kuczek & Associates. To register or for more information, contact Gina Gramarosso at ggramarosso@northernilfoodbank.org or 630-443-6910 ext. 130
March 19: Deerfield Public Library, 7 p.m.
March 24: West Suburban Center in Geneva, 7 p.m.

APRIL
Foodie 5K DuPage County
April 11
See article on page 8
Location: Cantigny Park, Wheaton

MAY
Foodie 5K Lake County
May 9
See article on page 8
Location: Adler Park, Libertyville

ONGOING
Host a food and fund drive
Food drives are needed throughout the year, and many people choose to donate money in addition to food items. To host a food/fund drive, contact Hanah Papp at hpapp@northernilfoodbank.org.

Food Bank Tours
First Tuesday of every month
We offer tours of our Food Bank centers, providing an up-close look at our operations and the opportunity to learn more about our efforts to solve hunger in the community. Register for a tour at www.SolveHungerToday.org/tour or contact Trent Nichols at tnichols@northernilfoodbank.org for more information.
Locations: West Suburban Center in Geneva (12 p.m. & 5 p.m.), Northwest Center in Rockford (2 p.m.) and North Suburban Center in Park City (2 p.m.)