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Summertime is almost here, and, like everyone, I can’t help my mind from wandering to thoughts of vacation and spending time in the sunshine. At the same time, it’s important to remember hunger doesn’t take a vacation. Our neighbors in need rely on food from Northern Illinois Food Bank throughout the year, which means we need volunteers to help sort and repack all of the donations that come in over the summer months.

I invite you to take a break from the heat this summer and join us at any of our three centers in Geneva, Park City and Rockford. The satisfaction that comes from helping provide meals to our hungry neighbors is enough to brighten anyone’s day, no matter the time of year.

Volunteer opportunities are available for groups of all sizes and children age eight and older when accompanied by an adult. Spending a morning, afternoon or evening at the Food Bank can be the perfect option for parents looking for a fun activity with their kids during the dog days of summer, or for a group of co-workers looking to get out of the office for a unique team-building opportunity.

The best part is knowing your time spent will help a child who doesn’t have enough to eat during the summer when school lunch programs are not available, or a hungry neighbor who is struggling to make ends meet and provide food for his or her family.

My office at our West Suburban Center in Geneva looks out over our volunteer hall, and seeing groups of volunteers selflessly donating their time gives me a daily reminder of just how much support we have in our mission of solving hunger.

Last year, more than 23,000 volunteers donated 123,000 hours by volunteering at the Food Bank. These numbers are incredible, but we know that if we’re going to reach our goal of distributing 75 million meals by the year 2020, we’re going to need even more support.

Help us get even more food to our hungry neighbors by spreading the word among your friends and family about the volunteer opportunities at the Food Bank. Beyond sorting and packing food, we also have a new skills-based volunteer program for people who want to share their talents, and we are always in need of volunteers to help out at events. Learn more and sign up today at www.SolveHungerToday.org/volunteer.

Volunteers truly are the lifeblood of our organization. Without their generous support, our work would be impossible, and hungry neighbors would not be able to rely on the nutritious food we provide throughout the year.

Many thanks to all of our volunteers and supporters, and best wishes to everyone for a summer filled with happiness. We hope you’ll visit us soon.

Warmly,

Julie Yurko, President and CEO

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Every $1 donated provides $8 worth of groceries for a neighbor in need like Trish.

To donate, visit www.SolveHungerToday.org or return your donation in the envelope provided in this newsletter.
The Student Food Pantry is fresh off celebrating its one-year anniversary in March. Open the first Thursday of every month, the pantry serves more than 830 students at its location and third Thursday of every month, the pantry starts its own initiative called Project Get Milk to help fund its portion of the cost, and last year the pantry raised enough money to support its current weekly allotment of 140 gallons within eight minutes after showing a light-hearted video about the program at its annual fundraiser.

Helping college students in need

As an employee in the Career Services Department at Northern Illinois University, Kathy Zulema noticed how adept college students are at volunteering, fundraising and holding food drives for the DeKalb community at large. At the same time, Kathy recognized food insecurity as a serious issue for a number of students on-campus.

“I talked to students who said they would ride their bike six miles in the snow to get food from one of the food pantries in the community,” Kathy said. “My thinking was food from one of the food pantries in the community, “My thinking was

The mission of Huskies Student Food Pantry is to provide emergency food to NU students in times of need. This can be on one occasion because a student encountered an unforeseen expense, or on a more regular basis for students struggling to make ends meet. Stephen is a junior majoring in communications at NU who hopes to one day work in sports broadcasting. He visited Huskies Student Food Pantry on its first distribution and never stopped coming back. Stephen has a part-time job but last spring found himself struggling to afford food, and he knew there were limits to the financial support he could expect from his parents.

“Every day we start off with milk and cereal I get from the food pantry, and that starts off Dylan’s whole day,” Anna said. “It gives him a healthy start so he can go off and at least not be behind the eight ball when he gets to school.”

Anna receives milk through Northern Illinois Food Bank’s Milk2MyPlate Program, which provides hungry neighbors with the calcium, Vitamin D and other essential nutrients found in milk. Kendall County Food Pantry is one of 34 community food pantries in the Food Bank’s network participating in Milk2MyPlate. More than 11,000 gallons of milk are delivered each month through the program, representing a big jump from the 1,300 gallons distributed among six food pantries when Milk2MyPlate began in 2012.

“When this program became available for us, it was kind of a no-brainer,” said Maria Spanier, Kendall County Food Pantry executive director. “We always speak about how important that first meal of the day is, especially for kids, and breakfast is not as good for them without the milk. Kids need this nutrient-dense product for growth.”

Cost is a barrier that often keeps hungry neighbors and food pantries from purchasing fresh milk, and donations have traditionally been hard to come by because milk is heavily regulated and has a short shelf life.

To overcome these challenges, Northern Illinois Food Bank forged a partnership with Prairie Farms Dairy - Rockford Division to directly deliver a weekly supply of fresh milk to participating food pantries. The Milk2MyPlate program allows hungry neighbors to take home milk that is as fresh, or fresher, than what would be found in the store.

“The Food Bank subsidizes a portion of the wholesale cost of milk for the food pantries. Kendall County Food Pantry started its own initiative called Project Get Milk to help fund its portion of the cost, and last year the pantry raised enough money to support its current weekly allotment of 140 gallons within eight minutes after showing a light-hearted video about the program at its annual fundraiser.

With more than 300 people visiting Kendall County Food Pantry every week, the pantry only distributes milk to families with children and seniors. Maria hopes to double the pantry’s milk distribution soon, and she is confident this can happen since milk is in demand that resonates with donors.

“I haven’t had an issue with people wanting to help fund the program at its annual fundraiser. Representatives from the Food Bank attended an awards ceremony on May 7 in Washington D.C. as part of the Innovation Center’s Sustainability Council meeting.

JUNE IS NATIONAL DAIRY MONTH. To make a donation to Northern Illinois Food Bank’s Milk2MyPlate Program and help the Food Bank subsidize a portion of the cost of milk for participating food pantries, contact Hester Bury at 630-443-6910 ext. 124 or hbury@northernilfoodbank.org. www.SolveHungerToday.org

Milk2MyPlate garners national recognition

The Midwest Dairy Council® nominated Northern Illinois Food Bank’s Milk2MyPlate Program for consideration for a U.S. Dairy Sustainability Award, which recognizes dairy farms and businesses for practices that deliver outstanding economic, environmental and/or social benefits.

The Milk2MyPlate Program earned an honorable mention in the category of Outstanding Achievement in Community Partnerships. Representatives from the Food Bank attended an awards ceremony on May 7 in Washington D.C. as part of the Innovation Center’s Sustainability Council meeting.

Milk2MyPlate

Starting the day off right

Ne gallon of milk might not seem like much, but for Anna, the gallon she receives during each of her two monthly visits to the Kendall County Food Pantry is vital. Last fall Anna became a foster parent for Dylan, a 5-year-old boy she began caring for in Yorkville. With an extra mouth to feed, Anna began turning to her local food pantry as a way to offset increased food expenses she was struggling to afford.

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With all the incredible work being done on a regular basis across Northern Illinois Food Bank’s network of food pantries and feeding programs, helping hungry neighbors can start to seem routine.

Shepherd’s Table soup kitchen in Joliet offers a reminder that routine can be remarkable.

Seven days a week, 365 days a year, hungry neighbors from the surrounding community come to Shepherd’s Table to receive a midday meal. We joined kitchen coordinator Gail Flatness on a Friday this spring to get a sense of all that goes into feeding lunch to an average of 100 neighbors in need every day.

9 A.M.

Sunlight pours into the Shepherd’s Table dining hall through large windows and illuminates brightly painted walls. Last year, 1,921 people came to Shepherd’s Table in 9 A.M. to help Shepherd’s Table run smoothly. These volunteers come from a wide range of organizations, including churches, schools and local companies.

On this day, a group of volunteers from Hollywood Casino Joliet have stepped up to make the lunchtime meal. One by one the volunteers arrive, wash their hands and get to work preparing an enormous salad to feed 75-100 people.

The group is led by Hollywood Casino executive chef Larry Alexander, who makes his way to the basement to survey Daybreak’s food closet. As he scans the shelves, he focuses on a stack of canned salmon Gail received from the Food Bank and begins mapping out the day’s menu.

“We’ll make salmon cakes with a little cream sauce to go over it,” Larry says. “We’ll knock out some rice pilaf and green beans to go along with the salad. And I saw chocolate chip cookies upstairs that can be popped in the oven.”

10 A.M.

Downstairs in the food closet, a group of community service volunteers is stockpiling shelves with the order that just came in from the Food Bank.

In the kitchen, the attention turns to creating salmon patties. Peppers, onion, mustard and mayonnaise are mixed in a big bowl, and one by one the 135 salmon cakes are coated with the mixture and rolled through bread crumbs before being placed on a baking sheet.

10:45 A.M.

Outside in the dining hall, a small group of people who are staying at Daybreak’s shelter are waiting patiently for lunch. One of these hungry neighbors is Mary Ellen, 59, a former public school teacher who lost her job in a round of layoffs.

“Lunch is the highlight of the day here for everyone,” Mary Ellen said. “The meals here are really good. There is a lot of variety, and I’m really impressed that with every meal there is a fresh salad.”

NOON

While lunch continues to be served inside, another Northern Illinois Food Bank delivery truck pulls up outside. This time the driver is Tom Aguirre, who covers a retail recovery route in Will County by picking up food donations from seven local grocery stores.

“We hit the mother lode with eggs at one of the stores today,” Tom says as he lowers a pallet from his truck. “Gail is going to be really happy because she says she always needs more eggs.”

Back in the dining room, several hungry neighbors return to the kitchen window for seconds. Included in this group is George, who is diabetic and staying at Daybreak’s shelter.

“The salmon is delicious and the rice is excellent,” George says before explaining how much he appreciates receiving a healthy meal that includes food that fits his dietary needs.

12:30 P.M.

With everyone served and the lunch hour winding down, volunteers help clean dishes and mop the kitchen floor.

Gail’s thoughts turn to the work she needs to do to coordinate meals for the upcoming weekend, but she spares a moment to reflect on Shepherd’s Kitchen’s impact.

“People count on this every day,” said Gail. “It’s always fun to see what the volunteers come up with, and the best part of the job is knowing you are helping somebody. It might just be a meal, but you’re helping somebody.”

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hat makes a recent college graduate decide to devote a year of service with Northern Illinois Food Bank as an AmeriCorps VISTA member? For Dylan Mooney, who grew up a few miles from the Food Bank’s West Suburban Center in Geneva in the community of Wayne, the attraction was the opportunity to make an impact close to home while gaining valuable experience at a non-profit organization.

“If you talk about non-profits in suburban Chicago, Northern Illinois Food Bank is top tier in terms of the effectiveness of their services and their reputation in the community,” said Dylan, a 23-year-old graduate of Wheaton College. “I figured that if they put as much time and effort into their staff as they do their programs, I would be sure to grow personally and professionally.”

This fiscal year Northern Illinois Food Bank’s mission of solving hunger is getting a significant boost from eight young professionals who are serving the community as AmeriCorps VISTA members. As part of their one-year term of service, the VISTA members are aiding the Food Bank by focusing in the areas of community engagement, capacity building, and volunteer development.

Joining Dylan are VISTA members serving at the Food Bank this year are: Jennifer Baek of Northbrook, Ill.; Amanda Breitenstein of Crystal Lake, Ill.; Abbey Johnson of Dodge City, Kan.; Jennifer Lesh of Elmhurst, Ill.; Joanna Magdalano of Schaumburg, Ill.; Kristen Prullt of Flowery Branch, Ga.; and Jessica Thuma of Woodstock, Ill.

The AmeriCorps VISTA program was founded in 1985 as a national service program designed specifically to fight poverty in America. Northern Illinois Food Bank received a three-year grant to use AmeriCorps VISTA members in 2012, and three former VISTA members have been hired to work full time at the Food Bank after their one-year term.

“Our VISTA members come from all walks of life, and their fresh perspective has been really great because they challenge us on some of our programs and processes,” said Jennifer Rippi, Northern Illinois Food Bank’s director of human resources. “The impact they make internally for the Food Bank has been tremendous.”

In his role as a community engagement ambassador, Dylan gives frequent presentations to corporate and community groups, researches and writes grant proposals and manages the Food Bank’s poverty simulation program. He is also working with Lord’s Lamb Ministry in Kankakee County to set up a capital campaign to raise $300,000 that will be used to construct a permanent building for the organization’s food pantry.

Dylan was presented with a Governor’s Volunteer Service Award on April 20 in Springfield. The statewide awards program is run by the bipartisan, Governor-appointed Serve Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service.

While Dylan appreciates the individual recognition, he is most proud of the day-to-day work he and his fellow VISTAs are doing at Northern Illinois Food Bank to help solve hunger.

“We all have in common the commitment to community service, which is the essence of AmeriCorps and VISTA,” said Dylan, who hopes to continue working in non-profits after his VISTA term ends. “That’s the common thread in our very colorful cloth.”

A Taste That Matters presented by Jewel-Osco

We look forward to seeing everyone at A Taste That Matters presented by Jewel-Osco on May 21 at Drury Lane in Oakbrook Terrace. Tickets are still available, so come enjoy tastings from Chicagoland’s best restaurants and celebrity wine makers, The Three Thieves. For details, contact Tiffany King at 630-443-6910 ext. 136 or tking@northernillinoisfoodbank.org.

And watch for photos from this year’s event in the next edition of The Full Plate.

AmeriCorps VISTA

Commitment to community service

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No school... …NO LUNCH.

Summer Meals

Reaching kids in need during the summer

A
sk a kid what their favorite part of summer is, and you’re likely to get this answer: no school.

But, no school means no school lunches, which for some kids in northern Illinois means no lunch at all.

Tenas, a mother of four from Zion, knows the struggle of providing food during the summer all too well.

“In the summertime, the kids are enjoying themselves and I’m happy they’re happy, but I’m looking at the fridge and the cabinets and thinking, ‘Where is the food going?’”

Tenas said during a visit to Abiding Love Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen in Zion.

Thanks to Northern Illinois Food Bank’s Summer Meal Program, families struggling to make ends meet like Tenae’s can find a sense of relief.

Through the program, families can get access to breakfast, lunch, and snacks for their children at nearly 100 sites across northern Illinois.

Last year alone, the program served 283,894 summer meals to children in need by working with summer-youth programs at parks, churches, schools, and other sites throughout the community. The program is expected to continue growing this year, meaning more kids can enjoy their school-free summer with a full tummy.

The Summer Meal Program runs from June 1 to Aug. 22, and is still accepting new sites for summer 2015. If your youth program is interested in hosting the Summer Meal Program, please call Tracy Keyes at 630-443-6910.

Northern Illinois Food Bank’s Summer Meal Program is offered in partnership with the USDA’s Summer Food Service Program and administered by the Illinois State Board of Education.

To locate a participating Summer Meal Program near you, visit SummerFeedingIllinois.org or call the Food Bank at 630-443-6910.

THE FULL PLATE

www.SolveHungerToday.org
Thank you to everyone who participated in the Foodie 5K presented by Meijer at Cantigny Park in Wheaton and Adler Park in Libertyville! Be sure to join us for our next Foodie 5K event Oct. 3 at Chicagoland Speedway in Joliet. Registration is open at www.SolveHungerToday.org/Foodie5K.

Our thanks to everyone who joined us in early March for an open house at our Northwest Center in Rockford. A special thanks to all who participated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony to commemorate the move, including members of the Rockford Chamber of Commerce, representatives from food donors DelMonte and Tyson Foods, and representatives from food pantries and feeding programs in the Stateline area.

In recognition of Canned Food Month in February, Ryan Companies US, Inc. created a can sculpture of a bulldozer that was on display in the lobby of our West Suburban Center in Geneva. The sculpture was built with nearly 700 cans in conjunction with a food and fund drive held by Ryan’s Great Lakes region office in Naperville. The campaign raised more than $6,000 and approximately 1,000 pounds of food for hungry neighbors. Ryan Companies constructed our West Suburban Center in 2011, and we are grateful for its continued support of the Food Bank!
Upcoming Activities

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

MAY
A Taste That Matters presented by Jewel-Osco
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. For details, contact Tiffany King at 630-443-6910 ext. 136 or tking@northernilfoodbank.org.

Location: Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace

SEPTEMBER
(Hunger Action Month)
Go Orange Day
September 3
Start planning how you will bring awareness to the issue of hunger during Hunger Action Month by wearing orange, holding a food or fund drive or starting a conversation about hunger.

OCTOBER
Foodie 5K presented by Meijer
October 3
Join us for the Foodie 5K and post-race festival including gourmet food trucks, entertainment and activities for kids. Learn more at www.SolveHungerToday.org/Foodie5K

Location: Chicagoland Speedway, Joliet

AUGUST 25
(8:30 A.M. SHOTGUN START)
Reserve your place in our 17th annual golf outing. Enjoy a day on the links and then join us following the round for a 19th Hole Awards Reception in Cantigny Golf Club’s clubhouse. For more information, to register your foursome or become a sponsor, contact Hanah Papp at 630-443-6910 ext. 159 or hpapp@northernilfoodbank.org.

Location: Cantigny Golf Club, Wheaton