Providing a full plate for everyone

Holiday Meal Box program spreads joy among neighbors in need

Partnering to prevent diabetes

Food Bank collaborates with nutrition experts through new initiative
So many reasons to be thankful

Food Safety

Food Bank earns high marks from AIB International

As a part of the food distribution chain, Northern Illinois Food Bank is entrusted with the product of its donors and is expected to handle it as the donors would while handling it as the donors would while distributing food to hungry neighbors. By adhering to AIB’s consolidated standards for food distribution centers, the Food Bank is assured it is following best practices and meeting legal requirements widely accepted as the food industry standard. As part of the audit, the Food Bank was graded in the areas of operational methods and practices, maintenance for food safety, cleaning practices, integrated pest management and documentation of food safety practices.

The Food Bank’s North Suburban Center in Park City and Northwest Center in Rockford are on target to complete AIB audits by the end of the year, and the process will repeat at all three of the Food Bank’s locations in 2017.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

One of my favorite activities as Northern Illinois Food Bank’s president and CEO is thanking our supporters. Trust me, it never gets old! I find it hard not to feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude when I see the impact of our work on the faces of the people who rely on our help.

Providing food to 71,000 people each week wouldn’t be possible without the incredible generosity the Food Bank receives throughout the year from everyone who shares our vision that no man, woman or child should go hungry in northern Illinois. So in keeping with the spirit of the Thanksgiving season, I would like to share a few of the many reasons I’m grateful:

I’ll start by saying thank you to our donors who chose to make a financial investment in the Food Bank this year. Because of you, our programs and operations are stronger, and we have made progress toward our goal of providing every meal, every day, for every hungry neighbor by the year 2020.

Thank you, to our generous food donors. More than 80 percent of the food we distributed this year was donated, and fresh produce made up 20 percent. This is because of the many manufacturers, grocers and farmers that decided to call us rather than put their food in a dumpster.

Thank you, to the more than 23,000 people who donated their time by volunteering with the Food Bank this past year. Whether it was helping sort produce, packing boxes of food, helping with data entry, welcoming our guests to our centers, or serving on a special event committee, your dedication to our mission — 134,906 hours, the equivalent of more than 60 full-time employees — brings a smile to my face, and hope to the hearts of our hungry neighbors.

A huge shout out to the Food Bank team and Board of Directors who allow me to do the work I do. It is so inspiring to come to work each day among so many talented, smart people dedicated to solving hunger.

Last, but not least, a heartfelt thanks to the dedicated men and women on the front lines of hunger who help operate the more than 400 community food pantries and feeding programs in our network. Your work is vital to our mission.

As you can see, no matter how you touched our Food Bank this year, your support made a difference. I am truly blessed to count you as part of our Northern Illinois Food Bank family.

With warm holiday wishes to you and yours,

Julie Yurko, president and CEO

P.S. I’m proud to share that the Food Bank just received Charity Navigator’s Four-Star Rating for the 12th consecutive year!

Holiday Hope

Providing a Full Plate for EVERYONE

A $30 donation can provide a complete holiday meal with turkey and trimmings for a family of eight. Help us give 35,000 families a reason to give thanks this holiday season. During November and December, the Food Bank will distribute more than 35,000 Holiday Meal Boxes to neighbors in need.

For thousands of parents, like Cynthia, struggling to make ends meet across northern Illinois, the joy of the season can be clouded by stress as they try to uphold holiday traditions for their little ones.

“The holidays are particularly tough for us – as much as they are joyous,” said Cynthia, a mother of three kids age 2 and younger. “My children love the holidays and I want to make the season special for them. I want them to have great memories, presents and a special celebratory meal – but it’s hard when you don’t have a cent to spare.”

Northern Illinois Food Bank is working to make sure there is a full plate for everyone this holiday season. During November and December, the Food Bank will distribute more than 35,000 Holiday Meal Boxes to neighbors in need.

A $30 donation provides a family like Cynthia’s with a 14-pound turkey, canned vegetables, fruit, potatoes, gravy, dressing, cranberry sauce and dessert to feed up to eight people.

The Food Bank’s Holiday Meal Box Program is possible thanks to the generosity of individuals like you, the support of donors like the Hillshire Brands Foundation, Del Monte Foods, Inc., The Jel Sert Company and Jewel-Osco, and thousands of volunteers who help pack the boxes. As Cynthia can attest, all of those hands working together make a real difference.

Last year, Cynthia and her husband Stephen benefitted from Food Bank’s Holiday Meal Box Program through Kuzma Care Cottage, their local food pantry in Wilmington. With Stephen out of work because of poor health and Cynthia supporting the family as a personal care assistant, the Holiday Meal Box Program helped guarantee smiles on the faces of their children Stephen Jr., Amber and Ashley around the dinner table.

“It saved the holidays for us,” Cynthia said. “They gave us everything we needed to make a holiday meal and in doing so they gave us so much more than food. They gave us hope and gave my children a sense of normalcy during a difficult time.”

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Northern Illinois Food Bank is working toward its strategic plan of providing 75 million meals to our neighbors in need by the year 2020. Look for the following icons throughout this issue of The Full Plate accompanying stories that highlight the five pillars of our strategic plan:

Building Bridges

Igniting the Community

Providing More Meals

Strengthening Leadership

Maintaining Frugality and Trust
Equipping a stronger network

Without any context, the new cooler and freezer at the Luke 3:11 Share Center seem just like any other commercial refrigeration equipment.

For an agency like Luke 3:11, which first opened its doors to hungry neighbors three years ago and now provides food to about 1,300 people every month from a church basement in Lake Villa, the cooler and freezer’s impact are far from ordinary.

“A refrigerator and freezer are things we often take for granted, but here at Luke 3:11 they really help support our overall goal of treating our guests with dignity,” said Rachel Fahrenheit, Luke 3:11’s director of communications. “In addition to helping us provide more food, the new equipment gives our guests the chance to look in the refrigerator or freezer and choose what they need for their families just like they would at the grocery store. It seems so simple, but little things like this can be empowering when you’re struggling to make ends meet.”

As a member of Northern Illinois Food Bank’s Direct Connect Program, Luke 3:11 receives food donations from local Walmart, Jewel-Osco and Target stores on a weekly basis. Thanks to the new refrigeration equipment, Luke 3:11 has been able to increase its intake of fresh, perishable food donated by the grocers.

Luke 3:11’s new cooler and freezer was one of several projects funded by a $50,000 grant Northern Illinois Food Bank received from Feeding America, thanks to the Walmart Foundation, to increase retail infrastructure capacity within its network. Food pantries in Carol Stream, Frankfort, Round Lake Beach, Waukegan and Yorkville are also purchasing new refrigeration equipment thanks to the grant.

“Our capacity-building initiative is really focused around supporting our member agencies’ ability to provide more healthy food,” said Scott Jewitt, Northern Illinois Food Bank’s director of network partnerships. “In order to distribute fresh food you need to preserve the shelf life, and in order to preserve the shelf life you need refrigeration.”

As Northern Illinois Food Bank sets its sights on distributing 75 million meals to neighbors in need by 2020, the Food Bank is also working to make sure its network of more than 800 food pantries and feeding programs can keep up with the demand.

To meet this objective, the Food Bank expeditiously distributes funding through capacity-building grants to member agencies for projects big and small that help increase operational efficiency.

“The arrival of Luke 3:11’s new cooler and freezer marked the finishing touch on a complete makeover of its food pantry that took place this summer with the goal of turning what was once a cramped area into a more welcoming and effective use of space. A large portion of the remodeling project was funded by a separate capacity-building grant that Luke 3:11 applied for and received from Northern Illinois Food Bank.

“We’re a small church with a small monthly budget,” Rachel said. “We’re feeding 1,300 individuals a month with a few hundred dollars, and we couldn’t do that without the Food Bank and the partnerships it has helped us create with local grocery stores. The Food Bank really allows us to stretch our financial resources and help as many people as possible.”

Food pantries

A rt maintains a pretty good sense of humor for someone who has undergone 17 surgeries in everything from his abdomen to his brain to his gall bladder and both knees.

“I’m a tough old guy,” he says, “I might be turning 62, but I like to say I’m 29 with a lot of experience.”

Art’s experience includes 12 years in the Army, during which he served in Vietnam and spent eight years as a translator in Germany before a knee injury ended his military career. As a civilian he’s been a jack of all trades, working as a roofer, plumber and restaurant manager, among other things.

All of those experiences could only do so much to prepare Art for the challenges he and his wife April are facing today as they struggle to make ends meet.

For the past three years, the couple’s only source of income has been Art’s social security and military disability payments. After paying monthly expenses for rent, medicine, utilities, car insurance and cell phones, Art and April are left with roughly $60 per week to cover food, gas, prescription co-pays and all other expenses.

To help alleviate some of the financial pressure, Art and April make the 40-mile round trip from their home in Addison to the food pantry at Loaves and Fishes Community Services in Naperville twice each month. They also rely on a monthly visit to People’s Resource Center in Wheaton as another source of groceries.

One in seven people in northern Illinois faces hunger. A $1 donation helps provide $8 of food for a neighbor in need.

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One in seven people in northern Illinois faces hunger. A $1 donation helps provide $8 of food for a neighbor in need.
November is National Diabetes Month, serving as a reminder that diabetes is a challenge facing many of our hungry neighbors. One out of every four households that receive food assistance from Northern Illinois Food Bank report having at least one member with diabetes, according to the Hunger in America 2014 study. It was with this in mind that the Food Bank recently launched a collaborative project with Northern Illinois University, KishHealth and People’s Resource Center aimed at preventing diabetes.

Launched this fall and known as the Food Bank’s diabetes prevention program, the curriculum to assisting during classes to collect data. The diabetes prevention program serves as an example of how Northern Illinois Food Bank is working to build bridges to resources that can help hungry neighbors face the wide range of challenges that can lead to needing food assistance. By providing the diabetes prevention classes in a convenient and familiar location like a local food pantry, the Food Bank anticipates more neighbors in need will be willing and able to take part.

“It’s so important that we remember the stresses people are under, what they go through in a day and that they are worrying about how they are going to pay for healthcare, bills and food,” said Kelly Brasseur, Northern Illinois Food Bank’s consulting dietitian. “This diabetes prevention program is about being present where our hungry neighbors are and meeting them at the point when they’re ready to learn.”

1. The Food Bank’s diabetes prevention classes are led by registered dietitians from KishHealth and graduate students from Northern Illinois University.
2. The program was piloted this fall at People’s Resource Center in Wheaton.
3. Participants in the class are able to take home healthy food and fresh produce after every class.
4. Funding for the development of Northern Illinois Food Bank’s diabetes prevention project was provided by Elmhurst Rotary and Community Memorial Foundation. To support this and other programs, contact Hester Bury at hbury@northernilfoodbank.org or 630-443-6910 ext. 124.

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### Using Mindfulness to Prevent Diabetes

**1. Be Thoughtful:** Slow down and think about your activity, eating and stress.

**2. Be Aware:** Learn about your medical history. You can prevent disease.

**3. Be Active:** Move your body with whole foods. Avoid extremes.

**4. Be Action:** More within your physical ability every day.

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### PARTNERING TO PREVENT DIABETES

November is National Diabetes Month, serving as a reminder that diabetes is a challenge facing many of our hungry neighbors.

- Be Thoughtful: Slow down and think about your activity, eating, exercise, stress relief and other day-to-day practices.
- Be Aware: Learn about your medical history. You can prevent disease.
- Be Active: Move your body with whole foods. Avoid extremes.
- Be Action: More within your physical ability every day.

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### Community Collaboration

The Food Bank’s diabetes prevention program is about being present where our hungry neighbors are and meeting them at the point when they’re ready to learn.

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### THE FULL PLATE

2. Be Aware: Learn about your medical history. You can prevent disease.
4. Be Action: More within your physical ability every day.

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### PARTNERING TO PREVENT DIABETES

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Hunger Action Month was once again a huge success in northern Illinois thanks to the support of organizations and individuals who turned out to help raise awareness of hunger during September.

In the case of Plainfield, the entire community worked together to keep the issue of hunger front and center throughout the month.

At the heart of Plainfield’s efforts was a community-wide food drive with drop-off locations at the Village Hall, Plainfield Library, Plainfield Area Chamber of Commerce, all 30 schools in Plainfield School District 202 and the school district office. To help drum up support for the food drive, a special Hunger Action Month bus made stops around Plainfield during September at local businesses and events such as Plainfield Central High School’s homecoming parade and the Plainfield Harvest 5K.

When the final tally was recorded at the end of the month, Plainfield residents had donated more than 10,000 pounds of food to Northern Illinois Food Bank, and its network members Green Harvest Food Pantry and Plainfield Area Interfaith Food Pantry.

“Having all the groups work together to support a good cause was really nice,” said Plainfield community relations director Amy De Boni. “Everybody was very supportive, and we got a great response from the residents and Plainfield Area Interfaith Food Pantry. Illinois Food Bank and its network members Green Harvest Food Pantry and Plainfield Area Interfaith Food Pantry.

Thank you to everyone who participated in Hunger Action Month! Please join us in building off the momentum created during September by spreading awareness of hunger throughout the year.

Other Hunger Action Month highlights for Northern Illinois Food Bank included:

• Panel discussions about hunger on the campuses of Northern Illinois University, Benedictine University and Lewis University.

• A 12-hour Hunger Action Month Pack-A-Thon at the Food Bank’s Northwest Center in Rockford during which more than 200 volunteers packed nearly 50,000 pounds of food for hungry neighbors.

• Month-long food drives hosted by Bloomingdale Public Library, City of Geneva, Gurnee Park District, Naperville Public Library and White Oak Library District.

• Countless Food Bank supporters wearing orange for Go Orange Day on Friday, signing the Food Bank’s Hunger Action Month pledge and sharing Hunger Action Month messages on social media.

Volunteers are needed throughout the year to help sort, inspect and pack food at Northern Illinois Food Bank’s centers in Geneva, Park City and Rockford. Sign up to volunteer at www.SolveHungerToday.org/Volunteer

Volunteer Appreciation

Dedicated volunteer group inspires through service

Monday mornings at Northern Illinois Food Bank are made brighter every week by the presence of volunteers from The Joshua Tree Community, winner of our Inspirational Volunteer Group of the Year Award.

Founded in 2014 by former special education teacher Amy Singer, The Joshua Tree Community aims to provide daily activities that enrich the lives of mildly developmentally disabled adults over the age of 22.

With smiles on their faces, a group of four to six Joshua Tree Community volunteers spend their Monday mornings helping with a variety of projects around the Food Bank’s West Suburban Center in Geneva. Some weeks they help stamp thank you letters for donors, while other weeks they write notes of encouragement for Foodie 5K runners. Another regular routine for the group involves making sure the Food Bank’s break room is fully stocked with plates, cups and napkins.

“We really love coming to Northern Illinois Food Bank,” Amy said. “It’s a very pleasant atmosphere. It’s a great place to work and to help people.”

The Joshua Tree Community is a nonprofit organization based in Geneva. The men and women who participate in the group live in the Fox Valley area. Music, arts and crafts, gardening and participation in book clubs are just a few of the other activities members of The Joshua Tree Community are involved in throughout the week, and Amy views volunteering at the Food Bank as an especially important way for the group to engage.

“Being part of the community is so important, and we really want to make sure we can give back to the communities where we live,” Amy said.

The Food Bank recognized The Joshua Tree Community and the rest of its 2015 Volunteer Award winners at its annual Volunteer Appreciation event in July.

“People come in and out of our lives on a daily basis, and often we move on with our day as if nothing special happens,” said Shannon Thompson, Northern Illinois Food Bank’s manager of volunteer programs. “Other times we are changed by who we meet and interact with, and that’s the kind of impact The Joshua Tree Community has had at the Food Bank. We are so grateful for this inspirational group’s commitment to helping our hungry neighbors.”

Community organizations interested in working with the Food Bank to develop Hunger Action Month efforts in 2016 or any other community engagement initiatives can contact Brandon Pettigrew at bpettigrew@northernilfoodbank.org. 630-443-9910 ext. 176.

Read about all of this year’s Volunteer Appreciation Award recipients at www.SolveHungerToday.org/VolunteerAwards

In this issue we feature Wendy Ryder, a dedicated member of the Food Bank’s Skills-Based Volunteer Program, which provides short-term and long-term projects for volunteers who want to use their professional skills to help solve hunger. Wendy lives in Elburn and is retired from career working in human resources and as a secretary for Wheaton-Warrenville School District 200. She donates her time one or more Wednesdays by working on a variety of office projects at our West Suburban Center in Geneva.

Why did you get involved with Northern Illinois Food Bank’s Skills-Based Volunteer Program?

I was looking for somewhere to volunteer, and after looking at the Food Bank’s website, I knew that this was the place where I wanted to be. I like doing office work, and I felt like that was the best way for me to help out.

What is your favorite project you’ve worked on at the Food Bank?

My favorite project so far is the Food Bank’s food drive program that I’m currently helping build and expand. I really enjoy the research involved, and I am currently working on the Food Bank’s special events team a delight to work with.

What is a fun fact about yourself?

I love to boat, golf, fish and swim.

Why do you support the Food Bank?

I have been truly blessed in my life, and I would like to make a difference in other people’s lives so they can feel blessed, too!

What is your favorite part about volunteering at the Food Bank?

I feel very appreciated by the staff. Everyone is so nice and kind to each other. I feel fortunate to work in such an environment.

What is the best advice you’ve ever received?

My mother always taught me to treat others as I would want to be treated, and be kind to others as I would like to be treated, and to think of others in my daily life.

Become a skills-based volunteer

Are you looking to volunteer your time using your professional skillset? View a list of projects and complete an interest form at www.SolveHungerToday.org/skillsbasedvolunteers.
More than 160 golfers turned out to help support the Food Bank and raise funds to support our programs that provide nutritious food for our hungry neighbors.

Our sincere thanks to West Suburban Bank for sponsoring our 17th annual Hunger Scramble golf outing.

Special thanks to event chair Brian McCaskey (fourth from left), Chicago Bears Senior Director of Business Development, for helping make Stars and Cars a huge success. More than 200 guests turned out to enjoy Chicago Bears, Chicago Bulls and NBA players attended, including (from left) Faison Bowers, Robbie Gould, James Coburn, Brian McCaskey, Kenny Santa, Emitee Bryant, Roland Harper, Jim Thornton, Bill Wennington, Brian Baschnagel, Al Harris and Jim Morrissey.

More than $226,000 were raised to help hungry neighbors through this year’s three Foodie 5K events.

www.SolveHungerToday.org

AROUND THE FOOD BANK

Presented by

Fifth Third Bank

Our sincere thanks to everyone who attended the 3rd Annual Stars and Cars on Oct. 8 at Steve Foley Motors of Northbrook – Cadillac, Rolls-Royce, Bentley. The fun evening raised more than $80,000 for Northern Illinois Food Bank.

Presented by

West Suburban Bank

Thank you to everyone who participated in our 17th annual golf outing Aug. 25 at Cantigny Golf Club in Wheaton.

Presented by

Meijer

Race fans and runners alike had a great time at our Foodie 5K on Oct. 3 at Chicagoland Speedway in Jollet. Participants had the exclusive opportunity of running on the Speedway track and finishing in Pit Row. Thank you to everyone who took part in our three Foodie 5K events this year. Be sure to join us again in 2016!
A Cup of Hope
March 6 (2-4 p.m.)
Join Northern Illinois Food Bank’s Executive Women’s Council for a special garden tea to solve hunger. The inaugural event will support the Food Bank and help raise funds and awareness for its programs that help hungry kids in northern Illinois. Get involved today. For sponsorship and ticket information, visit www.SolveHungerToday.org/ACupOfHope.
Location: The Hyatt Lodge at McDonald’s Campus, Oakbrook

Tomorrow’s Harvest
Northern Illinois Food Bank’s planned giving society allows donors to designate a bequest to the Food Bank in their will to create a legacy of hope for tomorrow’s families. For more information, contact Gina Gramarosso at ggramarosso@northernilfoodbank.org or 630-443-6910 ext. 130.

Join an Event Committee
Our special events department is seeking individuals to serve on planning committees for our signature fundraising events. For more information, contact Tiffany King at 630-443-6910 ext. 136 or tking@northernilfoodbank.org.

Still time to give
Make a donation by Dec. 31 to receive a year-end tax deduction. To donate, visit www.SolveHungerToday.org/Donate.

#GivingTuesday
DEC. 1
All gifts to Northern Illinois Food Bank on Giving Tuesday will be matched up to $30,000 thanks to generous support from Illinois Children’s Healthcare Foundation and other anonymous donors. For one day only, every $1 donation will provide $16 worth of food! Annually coinciding with Thanksgiving and the kickoff to holiday shopping season, Giving Tuesday harnesses the power of social media to create a movement around the holidays dedicated to giving. Learn more at www.SolveHungerToday.org/GivingTuesday, and share how you are supporting the Food Bank with #GivingTuesday and #ILGive.

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