THE FULL PLATE

DELIVERING HOPE ALL YEAR LONG

Food Bank drivers always prepared to weather tough conditions

FOOD DRIVES GO DIGITAL

Helping hungry neighbors easier than ever thanks to new website

SPRING 2016

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FEEDING OUR HUNGRY NEIGHBORS

Delivering hope all year long

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Helping hungry neighbors easier than ever thanks to new website
Talking about hunger, all year long

FROM THE PRESIDENT

H ere at Northern Illinois Food Bank, we’re always encouraging our supporters to Volunteer, Donate and Get Involved in solving hunger.

An easy way to help with the third part of this equation, the getting involved part, is to simply talk about the issue of hunger with family, friends and co-workers. By making sure people close to you know about the work being done by the Food Bank and our network, you help educate and engage more people in our mission.

Luckily, the calendar is filled with natural conversation topics to jumpstart discussions about hunger.

Take, for instance, the fact that February is Canned Food Month. Convenient and portable, canned foods are an enduring staple in the drive to solve hunger and have long been an ideal source of donations to food drives at schools, offices and churches. Revered for having a long shelf life, canned foods – and particularly those that are high in protein and low in sodium and sugar – are important for families and individuals who don’t always have access to fresh produce.

In this issue of The Full Plate, you’ll find information about how our new food and fund drive website is making the act of hosting a food drive easier than ever. In the You Matter To Us section, you’ll also get to know our friends at Dai Monta Foods, who every year donate millions of pounds of canned goods.

When the calendar flips to March, it becomes National Nutrition Month, and here at the Food Bank we’ll be highlighting our commitment to providing neighbors in need with access to a healthy diet that includes fresh produce, dairy, meat and other protein sources.

Last year we distributed more than 14.2 million pounds of produce, and our Milk2MyPlate Program recently distributed its 5 millionth serving of nutritious milk. (See photo and story below.)

The conversation turns to giving time during Volunteer Appreciation Month in April. More than 23,000 individuals donated more than 134,000 hours last year, equaling the output of more than 60 full-time employees, or one-third of our workforce. We’re so grateful to everyone who selflessly gives their time and talent to support our mission.

You can see some of the smiling faces that come through our doors to volunteer in our Around the Food Bank photos on pages 10 and 11.

As you can tell, it isn’t hard to find an occasion to talk about the subject of hunger and the work being done here at Northern Illinois Food Bank. Whether you choose to discuss these topics with your kids, with colleagues over lunch or with a wider audience on social media, just know we’re thankful you are part of the conversation.

Warmly,

Julie Yurko, President and CEO

Milk2MyPlate

Northern Illinois Food Bank is working toward its strategic goal 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!

Milk Milestone

Northern Illinois Food Bank surpassed 5 million servings of nutritious milk through its Milk2MyPlate Program in December and marked the occasion by celebrating the milestone at St. John Lutheran Church Food Pantry in Joliet along with representatives from Prairie Farms Dairy and Feeding America.

Milk is traditionally one of the most requested, yet least donated, items in the world of food banking. Making sure hungry neighbors have access to this nutritious product was the goal when the Food Bank and Prairie Farms launched Milk2MyPlate in 2012.

Today the program is a model for food banks across the country and distributes more than 15,000 gallons of milk every month through 42 participating food pantries in 12 counties. Thank you to all of the generous donors who help make the program possible, including The Chicago Community Trust, The Christopher Family Foundation, Boeing Company Employee Community Fund, Community Foundation of Northern Illinois, and the DuPage Foundation.

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

Making ends meet thanks to community support

Medical expenses are an additional concern for Julio’s wife, who is asthmatic and relies on a nebulizer. The couple also supports Julio’s 22-year-old brother-in-law, who is developmentally disabled.

Born and raised in East Los Angeles, Julio moved to the Chicago area 25 years ago. In DeKalb, he has found a community full of support. Julio and his wife give back when they can by volunteering at Open Closet in DeKalb, which provides free clothes and shoes to families in need.

O hear Julio explain it, he and his wife are getting by with what they have, but that wouldn’t be possible without the support of Salvation Army Food Pantry and other agencies like it in his hometown of DeKalb.

For more than a year, Julio has worked for a temp agency and bounced from one job to another. The circumstances represent a change of pace from the steady job he had working in maintenance for a hotel in suburban Lombard. The round trip to Lombard took its toll, though, as transportation problems with an old vehicle forced Julio to leave the position.

Given the family’s limited income, Julio and his wife struggle to keep up with bills, particularly during the winter when utility expenses are high.

“You have to pay for your vehicle insurance, your phone bill, your electricity, your gas, your rent, your internet payment,” Julio said. “It’s stuff you absolutely need. For example, I need the internet because I’m always looking for work, and I’m always checking my e-mails to see if I’m hearing back from people.”

The idea of a community safety net isn’t lost on Julio as he browses the shelves at Salvation Army Food Pantry and picks out a wide range of items provided by Northern Illinois Food Bank.

“I come here once a month to get what I need,” Julio said. “It’s enough to hold us over. And it’s not just this pantry, but all of the pantries in the community. DeKalb has a lot of help available.”

Julio particularly appreciates the chicken breast tenders he adds to his cart, saying the large packet of frozen meat will help provide several meals.

“There is always good pickings at this food pantry,” Julio said. “My wife likes the cranberry juice, and you get a lot of good canned fruits. I’m happy with whatever meat I can get, and everything is always high quality.”

Julio’s Story

Julio Yurko, President and CEO
Food drives go digital

When it comes to helping hungry neighbors, just about everyone is familiar with the act of dropping non-perishable goods into a donation box as part of a food drive. This feel-good experience is now possible with the click of a button thanks to Northern Illinois Food Bank’s new food and fund drive website.

Like so many other aspects of modern society, making sure our hungry neighbors have access to the nutritious food they need to lead healthy and productive lives can be done from the comfort of the couch by visiting www.SolveHungerToday.org/FoodandFundDrive on a computer or mobile device. Virtual food drives are only one highlight of the new website, which also includes easy step-by-step instructions for hosting a fundraiser to commemorate any special occasion, from a birthday or wedding to a memorial for a loved one.

“You want to connect your celebration to feeding a neighbor in need, this is your place,” said Lacie Manning, Northern Illinois Food Bank’s director of philanthropy.

Every $1 donated to Northern Illinois Food Bank helps provide $8 of food for a hungry neighbor, and the new website makes it easy for anyone hosting a fund drive to get friends, family and co-workers involved in solving hunger. (See sidebar on this page for how one couple raised $10,000 for their 10th wedding anniversary.)

If hosting a virtual food drive is your preference, the new website provides a convenient way for participants to shop the Food Bank’s aisle of most needed items. For example, 100 pounds of carrots can be donated for $10, and adding 40 dozen fresh eggs to your cart is possible with a $15 donation.

Virtual food drives are a win-win-win for all parties involved. Hungry neighbors benefit because fresh produce and other perishable items that can’t be donated through traditional food drives are now in the equation. Meanwhile, food drive hosts don’t have to worry about setting up donation boxes and physically collecting and delivering heavy food items to the Food Bank. Lastly, by not having to sort and process donations from physical food drives, the Food Bank can free up its volunteers to work on projects involving big bulk donations.

Of course, the Food Bank still welcomes traditional food drives, which bring in thousands of pounds of non-perishable goods each year. Information for hosting a physical food drive at your school, church or office can also be found at www.SolveHungerToday.org/FoodandFundDrive, the one-stop shop for helping hungry neighbors.

Online Giving

Success Story

Couple’s anniversary fundraiser exceeds lofty goal

As Samantha and Jesse Fisher approached their 10th wedding anniversary on July 30, 2015, they couldn’t help but recognize the strength of their marriage was built with the support of friends and family they could lean on in good times and bad.

To celebrate 10 years together, the couple wanted to pay that support forward to neighbors in need, so they set the goal of raising $10,000 for Northern Illinois Food Bank.

Over the course of a year, the couple tapped into the generosity of friends, family and co-workers using an online crowd-funding page much like the Food Bank’s new food and fund drive website. The results were inspiring as Samantha and Jesse ultimately surpassed their goal, raising more than $11,000.

“The biggest piece of advice I would give is don’t dismiss the power of your own impact,” Samantha said. “A lot of times we talk ourselves out and think we’re not capable of certain things, that our friends won’t give and nobody will care. Take it from me that you’ll be pleasantly surprised if you don’t dismiss yourself and your goals.”

Visit www.SolveHungerToday.org/FisherAnniversary to read the full story about Samantha and Jesse’s campaign, including more tips and advice on how to run a successful fundraiser.

Solving Hunger

Bensenville schools step up to help neighbors in need

Sometimes it only takes a small spark to inspire an entire community to rally around the idea of solving hunger.

In September, kids at Fenton High School in Bensenville, where during an all-staff meeting prior to the first day of school in August, teachers and administrators were presented with an alarming statistic: 52 percent of Fenton’s students qualify for free or reduced price lunch.

This idea that more than half of Fenton’s 1,500 students might not have enough to eat served as something of a wake-up call. “We look at our students as our children, and when we know they’re hungry at night, that’s concerning to us,” Fenton principal James Ongtengco said. “We know you can’t learn if you’re hungry.”

Before the all-staff meeting was over, Fenton’s English Department chair Mike Mitchell had tasked a relative to work with Northern Illinois Food Bank to inquire about what could be done to support students and their families struggling with hunger.

Mike decided a good start would be to host the Food Bank’s Mobile Pantry, a traveling food pantry that provides food to high-need communities. He reached out to fellow faculty members asking for help to cover the $1,200 cost to sponsor a Mobile Pantry and the response was overwhelming.

Within days enough money had been raised to host a Mobile Pantry in September. The issue of hunger quickly became front and center on the school’s website and social media platforms as students and teachers began wearing orange for Hunger Action Month. All the while, checks continued to arrive on Mike’s desk. By the end of 2015, more than $10,000 had had been raised by Fenton’s administrators, faculty and student council to house series of Mobile Pantries.

“When I talk to faculty and students, they want to do something to make the change,” Mike said. “We went from aloofness to awareness to action in a hurry. Speaking for myself, I know there was a problem with poverty and hunger at our school, but not necessarily the extent. Once I grasped that, my first thought was, ‘What can I do?’

At the same time the Fenton High Community was centering its attention on hunger, a similar movement was underway at Bensenville School District 2, which is one of two elementary school districts that feed into Fenton.

Faced with even starker statistics that show 74 percent of students in District 2 qualify for free and reduced lunch, Superintendent Jim Stelter also began exploring the idea of supporting students and families. “When you look at what’s happening in DuPage County, you see things are changing fast,” Jim said. “Bensenville is kind of a blue-collar, working-class community. A lot of people work fourly hour jobs with the industry around O’Hare airport, and they’re trying to make ends meet. Living in the Chicagoland area is expensive, so it’s hard for families living at or near the poverty level.”

Jim also gravitated to the idea of sponsoring a Mobile Pantry for local families and found funding through his district’s administrators, the Bensenville Wood Dale Rotary Club and local business owners. Soon a plan was mapped out where Fenton High and District 2 alternate sponsoring and hosting Mobile Pantries every month.

The school districts are also supporting their community’s food pantry and working with the food pantry’s leaders to best serve families in need.

“The Bensenville Wood Dale Food Pantry does some really great work, and they provide service to thousands of families every year,” Jim said. “For us, the question is how can we complement and supplement the food pantry through these Mobile Pantries to be even more impactful, because the need is continuing to grow.”

Donations to Northern Illinois Food Bank help make the Mobile Pantry Program possible. Sponsorship opportunities are available for corporate groups and families, and if desired, can include volunteering at a Mobile Pantry in a high-need community. For more information, contact Hester Bury at hbury@northernilfoodbank.org or 630-443-6910 ext. 124.
Food Bank drivers always prepared to endure tough conditions

S

sistency is more than two hours away when Orville Fry arrives at Northern Illinois Food Bank’s West Suburban Center in Geneva on a chilly December morning. A brisk wind blows from the north, making the below-freezing temperature feel even colder as he begins his daily routine of checking the tires and engine of the semi-truck that serves as his office five days a week.

With his safety check complete, Orville heads inside the Food Bank’s warehouse and begins loading more than 37,000 pounds of food into his truck’s 53-foot trailer. Today, he is scheduled to deliver 72 pallets containing 37,000 pounds of food to locations across northern Illinois.

“Every day, our drivers are dealing with the elements,” said Tom Netcher, the Food Bank’s director of transportation and facilities. “Regardless of whether it’s 95 degrees or 20 below, they’re out there making sure food gets to our hungry neighbors.”

As the eldest statesman among the Food Bank’s drivers, with more than 44 years of experience on the road throughout his career, Orville is well aware of the challenges that come with driving a semi-truck during the winter.

In addition to treacherous road conditions caused by snow, sleet and ice, Food Bank drivers often have to navigate around large snow piles that build up in already-cramped parking lots where deliveries and pick-ups are made. Sub-zero temperatures can wreak havoc on the mechanical lift gates that drivers rely on to unload heavy pallets of food, and ice on the steel floors of lift gates can create the potential for injury and equipment damage, which is why Food Bank drivers always carry a bag of deicer salt.

While spending long hours on the road during the winter isn’t easy, Orville maintains a positive attitude. Four years ago the 75-year-old grandfather of 15 came out of a brief retirement to begin driving for the Food Bank as a way to keep from getting restless.

“This job makes the day worthwhile for Orville while representing the Food Bank. The Food Bank’s directors and staff rely on to unload heavy pallets of food, and ice on the steel floors of lift gates can create the potential for injury and equipment damage, which is why Food Bank drivers always carry a bag of deicer salt. While spending long hours on the road during the winter isn’t easy, Orville maintains a positive attitude. Four years ago the 75-year-old grandfather of 15 came out of a brief retirement to begin driving for the Food Bank as a way to keep from getting restless.

“This job makes the day worthwhile,” Orville said. “You become like family with these people you regularly see along your route.”

Orville’s cheery disposition is evident in the good-natured ribbing he engages in with a group of volunteers at Harvard Community Food Pantry as he delivers nine pallets filled with frozen meat, fresh produce and an assortment of non-perishable items.

“Orville is a great guy,” said Mark Dion, one of the volunteers. “He’s always very cooperative, and we look forward to joking around with him.”

Safety is, and always has been, the top priority for Orville, who says he prefers to drive a truck when at a stop on a hill. A truck may roll back as the drive takes his foot off the brake.

On The Road

Food Bank drivers always prepared to endure tough conditions

by the numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<td>Food Bank’s fleet</td>
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<td>Miles driven by Food Bank drivers last year</td>
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<td>Deliveries made to network agencies last year</td>
<td>5,503</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food recovery pick-ups last year</td>
<td>13,971</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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TIPS FOR DRIVING NEXT TO BIG TRUCKS

Help make the road safer by following these four safety tips while driving next to a big truck:

1. Don’t speed up when a truck is passing you. Instead, slow down and drive even more slowly.
2. Don’t continuously drive alongside a truck.
3. Leave plenty of room between you and a truck when at a stop on a hill. A truck may roll back as the driver takes his foot off the brake.
4. Don’t speed up when a truck is passing you. Instead, slow down and drive even more slowly.
Calling all Foodie 5K Fanatics in 2016

The Foodie 5K presented by Meijer is returning to Wheaton, Libertyville and Joliet in 2016, giving serious runners and families alike the opportunity to stay healthy with exercise while raising funds for Northern Illinois Food Bank. This year’s races will take place just in time for spring to usher in warmer weather, allowing participants to shake off the mundane winter hibernation and get outdoors for some fresh air. In fact, the races take place over three consecutive months, giving participants an opportunity to become a Foodie 5K Fanatic and take part in all three races. Anyone who does will receive registration discounts and a commemorative gift.

The fun gets started April 9 in DuPage County when the Foodie 5K returns to Cantigny Park in Wheaton for the third consecutive year. The scene shifts to Lake County on May 14 when the Foodie 5K moves to its new site at Independence Grove Forest Preserve in Libertyville. When the Foodie 5K rolls into Will County on June 11, participants will once again have the exclusive opportunity to run and walk on the apron of the Chicagoland Speedway track in Joliet.

In 2015 the Foodie 5K expanded to three locations, attracted more than 2,500 participants and raised more than $200,000 for the Food Bank. This year those totals are expected to rise as the events continue to grow in popularity, which will help provide even more food to neighbors in need.

All three Foodie 5Ks are chip-timed fun runs/walks open to all ages. All registered participants will receive a shirt, a $2 food truck voucher to be used at the post-race festival and more. Visit www.SolveHungerToday.org/Foodie5K for updates on participating food trucks, entertainment and activities for kids at each of the race locations.

Registration for each race is $35. Readers of the Full Plate can get a $10 discount off adult registration by entering the promo code “FULLPLATE” at checkout. The registration fee for ages 6-12 is $15, and ages 0-5 are free. Volunteer and sponsorship opportunities are available for all three race locations.

Register at www.SolveHungerToday.org/Foodie5K

Use promo code: FULLPLATE to receive $10 discount off adult registration

Foodie 5K DuPage County

9 A.M.
SATURDAY, APRIL 9
Cantigny Park, Wheaton

Foodie 5K Lake County

9 A.M.
SATURDAY, MAY 14
Independence Grove Forest Preserve, Libertyville

Foodie 5K Will County

9 A.M.
SATURDAY, JUNE 11
Chicagoland Speedway, Joliet

Newly formed Women’s Council hosting inaugural event

Nancy Corey brings a unique perspective to her role as co-chair of Northern Illinois Food Bank’s newly formed Executive Women’s Council.

“If we had to work for two major food companies during my career, and it really bothers me that people in our communities are going hungry,” Nancy said. “It’s a travesty that people are going without, considering the abundance of food in this country.”

As a Northern Illinois Food Bank donor and volunteer, Nancy learned how hunger exists in communities like her hometown of Naperville and felt compelled to do more to help her neighbors in need. She embraced the opportunity to get involved with the Food Bank’s Executive Women’s Council as it began to develop in the spring of 2015.

The mission of the Executive Women’s Council is to work in partnership with the Food Bank to enhance the Food Bank’s Child Nutrition Program, and to support the Food Bank by engaging more women to donate time, food and funds through an annual fundraising event and other initiatives.

A Cup of Hope: A Garden Tea to Solve Hunger is the Executive Women’s Council’s first-ever fundraiser. The event takes place from 2-4 p.m. on Sunday, March 6 at the Hyatt Lodge at McDonald’s Campus in Oak Brook. Tickets are $100 each and available at www.SolveHungerToday.org/CupOfHope.

Guests will enjoy sparkling wine, an extensive and descriptive selection of loose teas, finger sandwiches, fresh fruit, and assorted pastries and scones while hearing tips and the newest trends in gardening from guest speaker Kellie O’Brien, philanthropist and owner of English Gardens, Ltd. Attendees will also have an opportunity to win themed raffle prizes. All proceeds from the event will benefit Northern Illinois Food Bank.

“The goal as we hold this event is to get people to want to be part of the Executive Women’s Council or get involved with the Food Bank,” Nancy said. “We’d like to see this grow.”

Nancy and her co-chair Karen Golden are currently joined by eight other Executive Women’s Council members from a wide range of professional backgrounds including finance, communications and education. The group meets monthly and is seeking new members.

“It’s women from all different backgrounds, which makes it interesting for someone like me who spent most of my career in corporate America,” Nancy said. “I really enjoy working with this group, and I’m excited to see it develop.”

Interested in getting involved with the Executive Women’s Council? Contact Gina Gramassio at 830-443-6910 ext. 130 for more information.

Purchase tickets at www.SolveHungerToday.org/ACupofHope

or by contacting Tiffany King at 830-443-6910 ext. 136

A CUP OF HOPE

SUNDAY, MARCH 6, 2016
2-4 P.M.
Hyatt Lodge at McDonald’s Campus
2815 Jorie Blvd., Oak Brook
Volunteer Appreciation

Thank you to all of the amazing volunteers who give their time to help our hungry neighbors! April is National Volunteer Appreciation Month, but our gratitude extends throughout the year. Volunteers are the backbone of our organization, and without them we wouldn’t be able to serve more than 71,000 hungry neighbors each week.

More than 23,000 people donated more than 134,000 hours at Northern Illinois Food Bank last year. Those hours allowed 152 volunteers to help more than 35 full-time employees.

Volunteers at the Food Bank offers a good team-building opportunity for groups of co-workers.

Learn about all of our volunteer opportunities at www.solvehungertoday.org/volunteer.

Food Bank volunteers help sort and pack food that is distributed to neighbors in need. The Food Bank also offers a wide range of skills-based volunteer opportunities for people who would like to donate their talents to help solve hunger.

Volunteering at the Food Bank offers a good team-building opportunity for groups of co-workers.

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An Evening of Financial Wellness

Achieving Your Financial and Personal Goals

March 16 in Geneva

Northern Illinois Food Bank is grateful for the generosity shown by the thousands of individual donors who help support its mission of solving hunger.

As a way of showing that appreciation, the Food Bank is hosting An Evening of Financial Wellness at 6:30 p.m. on March 16 at its West Suburban Center in Geneva. The event is free and designed to help donors and supporters of the Food Bank accomplish their financial and philanthropic goals.

Attendees will be able to choose from three breakout sessions led by financial professionals who are also Food Bank donors. The seminars being offered are:

• Designing Your Retirement Plan – presented by Nancy Coutu, principal, Money Managers, Ltd.
• Wills vs. Trusts – presented by Ted Kuczek, estate planning attorney, Kuczek & Associates
• Planning for Your Child’s College Education – Zac Larson, wealth advisor, and Jenny McAdams, financial associate, Thrivent Financial

Northern Illinois Food Bank has earned a four-star rating from Charity Navigator for 12 consecutive years, and 97 percent of its resources fund programs that help feed hungry neighbors. The Food Bank recognizes its commitment to frugality and trust is shared by its donors, which is why it is offering financial planning seminars for the third consecutive year.

For more information, or to reserve your place at An Evening of Financial Wellness, visit www.solvehungertoday.org/seminar or contact Gina Gramarosso at 630-443-6910 ext. 130
Upcoming Activities

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

A Taste That Matters presented by Jewel Osco

May 19 (6-10 p.m.)

Join Northern Illinois Food Bank and Jewel-Osco for an entertaining night featuring tastes from some of Chicagoland’s finest restaurants at the fifth 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, and tickets can be purchased at www.SolveHungerToday.org/ATasteThatMatters. For more details, contact Tiffany King at 630-443-6910 ext. 136 or tking@northernilfoodbank.org.

FEBRUARY

Full on Faith
Feb. 22-27
Full on Faith is a week-long initiative dedicated to helping faith-based organizations serve their community by volunteering, hosting food drives, discussing hunger and raising funds. Learn more at www.SolveHungerToday.org/FullOnFaith.

MARCH

A Cup of Hope: A Garden Tea to Solve Hunger
March 6 (2-4 p.m.)
See article on page 9 and purchase tickets at www.SolveHungerToday.org/CupofHope.
Location: The Hyatt Lodge at McDonald’s Campus, Oak Brook

An Evening of Financial Wellness
March 16 (6:30 p.m.)
See article on page 11 and sign up at www.SolveHungerToday.org/seminar.
Location: West Suburban Center, Geneva

APRIL

Foodie 5K
DuPage County
April 9 (9 a.m.)
See article on page 8 and sign up at www.SolveHungerToday.org/Foodie5K.
Location: Cantigny Park, Wheaton

MAY

Foodie 5K
Lake County
May 14 (9 a.m.)
See article on page 8 and sign up at www.SolveHungerToday.org/Foodie5K.
Location: Independence Grove Forest Preserve, Libertyville

JUNE

Foodie 5K
Will County
June 11 (9 a.m.)
See article on page 8 and sign up at www.SolveHungerToday.org/Foodie5K.
Location: Chicagoland Speedway, Joliet

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