Welcome home
Food Bank opens its fourth distribution center in Joliet

Community is center stage at We Care Grundy
New South Suburban Center will better serve agencies in southern region
Starting a new chapter

Dear Friends,

Summer is often the most delightful time of year, as we trade the cold of winter for warmth and sunshine that allows us to enjoy more time outdoors with family and friends as school lets out for the year and family vacations begin.

Here at the Food Bank, we’re celebrating for a different reason this summer. We’re celebrating the opening of our fourth distribution center in Joliet—a beautiful, 18,000-square-foot space that will enable us to better serve all of our neighbors in need and our 175 agencies throughout Will, Grundy, Kendall and Kankakee counties. This center also enables us to be a better community partner to YOU—the individuals, businesses and organizations who so graciously donate time, food and funds to solve hunger, and who have helped us make this center a reality.

As many of you know, these southern counties are some of the highest-need areas throughout Northern Illinois, with nearly 80,000 neighbors facing hunger everyday—more than half being children. We’re thrilled that this center will allow us to provide an estimated one million additional meals per year to these precious neighbors.

The list is long of those who have supported us since we embarked on this journey to open this center. From our landlords at Harvest Bible Chapel to our lawyer Michael O’Brien, our dedicated project manager Bob Super, building architect Thomas Budzik of Thomas Architects, contractor Schramm Construction, all the way down to every individual person that gave even $1 toward this center—we thank you!

As you read this issue of The Full Plate, I hope you too feel excited and grateful for our South Suburban Center and everything it represents. We’ll take you on a photo tour of the Center, and share a story from one of the agencies SSC will serve. I also urge you to join us for a volunteer shift at the Center as well—you’ll find more information about how to get involved below.

To say we’re grateful is a huge understatement. We literally could not have opened this center without your support. Again, thank you from the bottom of all of our hearts!

Warmly,

Julie Yurko
President and CEO

Get involved in Joliet

Visit SSC and volunteer with us this summer!

South Suburban Center volunteer shifts are now available for registration on the public shift calendar on our website! Volunteering with us is the perfect volunteer opportunity for individuals and groups of all sizes and ages (must be age 8+), up to 30 people. For groups larger than 20, please contact Shannon (below) for help scheduling your shift.

Visit SolveHungerToday.org/VolunteerCalendar to sign up for an upcoming shift and be one of the first groups and individuals to volunteer with us in Joliet!

For questions or more information, please contact Shannon Thompson at stthompson@northernillinoisfoodbank.org or call 630-443-6910 ext. 125. See you soon!

Northern Illinois Food Bank is working toward solving hunger in Northern Illinois for our neighbors in need. Look for the following icons throughout this issue of The Full Plate accompanying stories that highlight the five pillars of our strategic plan:

Provide More Meals
Ignite the Community
Build Healthy Communities
Strengthen Leadership
Be Trusted Financial Stewards

Building Healthy Communities

Community is center stage at We Care of Grundy County

O n the corner of Bedford Road and Union Street in Morris, sits an unassuming one-story brick building with two windows and doors facing the main street. Above the doors hangs a burgundy and white sign whose logo and message of just two words – We Care – attract attention in a way the building itself perhaps does not. This is the front façade of We Care of Grundy County Inc., a United Way Community Partner, Salvation Army Service Extension, and one of four Northern Illinois Food Bank partner agencies that serves Grundy County residents.

Inside, it quickly becomes clear the 18,000-square-foot building that We Care has called home for the past three years is a unique community organization, thanks to the variety of services it offers: food pantry, clothes closet, rent/mortgage and utility assistance, and more. We Care is a one-stop-shop for clients to get the help they need, whether that means picking up fresh bread and produce in the afternoon, or coming in to peruse the racks of donated clothing in search of interview-ready apparel.

In addition to its array of client-centered services, a standout feature of We Care is its focus on collaboration within the surrounding community. Easter Seals, one of We Care’s many partners, has shared office space in the same building for its Jump Start parenting support program since May 2017. Beyond sharing an address, the organizations also mention one another during community presentations and share client referrals during monthly mobile pantry and resource days.

In partnership with the local Salvation Army, We Care assists in running a strengths-based case management program called Pathway of Hope. The goal of this program is to walk alongside participants and help them reach their goals, whether it be to find new housing, employment, mental health, or other goals.

“What Pathway of Hope is all about using the whole community to help people through crisis situations and help them find self-sufficiency,” explains We Care’s Executive Director Eric Fisher.

The program’s “all-hands-on-deck” approach leverages We Care’s internal resources while also utilizing resources from various partner organizations, including Easter Seals, The Salvation Army, PADS, Grundy County Housing Authority, and the health department among others.

“We want to be a robust model and really make a difference,” he says. “We have to ask, ‘What do we need to do to help people?’”

1. Front façade of We Care of Grundy County Inc.
2. We Care Executive Director Eric Fisher (right) with intern Corey (left) in the bread section of the food pantry; Clients can pick up bread and produce every day We Care is open during the last half hour of operations.
3. Food pantry at We Care is client choice, meaning clients select their own groceries once a month based on family size, dietary restrictions, and personal preference.

For more information about these issues, please visit www.SolveHungerToday.org.

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On May 5, the first volunteer shift was held in the newly-opened space, as volunteers from Village Christian Church helped pack more than 5,500 pounds of potatoes for distribution.

The Center accommodates groups up to 30 people, and shifts can be booked online (see page 2).

Food Bank staff provided tours of the new facility, showcasing the new staff offices and public meeting spaces, main warehouse and volunteer packing area, as well as the existing refrigeration, freezer and dock space which made the former Cub Foods location an appealing choice for the home of the Food Bank’s fourth Center.

SQUARE FOOTAGE: 18,000

LOCAL NEIGHBORS FACING HUNGER: 80,000+

MEALS SERVED LAST YEAR: 14 M+

MEMBER AGENCIES SERVED: 175

Joliet Mayor Bob O’Dekirk (left), Will County Executive Larry Walsh, and Congressman Dan Lipinski helped Food Bank President & CEO Julie Yorke and Food Bank Board Members to unveil the new 14,000 square-foot space. The public grand opening ceremony took place on May 4, 2018.

SOUTH SUBURBAN CENTER

For this issue of The Full Plate, we sat down with Bob Super, longtime Food Bank supporter and Emeritus Board Member, to learn how he became involved with the Food Bank more than 25 years ago. Owner of Blackshire Real Estate, LLC, Bob played a central role in bringing the South Suburban Center to life.

Briefly tell us a little about yourself.

I was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where I spent my early childhood before moving to Laurel, Maryland when my father began a 20-year career with the NSA at Ft. Meade. I graduated from the University of Maryland with a Bachelor’s degree in Accounting, and have focused my career in institutional investment management, commercial real estate development and venture capital.

How did you get involved with the Food Bank, and how did you get involved with SSC project specifically?

I first got involved while my wife worked for Second Harvest (now Feeding America)—I volunteered and also served on the Board in the early 2000’s before joining the Emeritus Board in 2013, which is where I found out about the SSC project and joined the committee!

What do you like most about working with Northern Illinois Food Bank? The heart and efficiency of the mission. Cherishing every human life begins with food and nutrition, and food waste is very sad indeed. Working through the Food Bank, Feeding America, and the community to distribute gleaned resources to those in need is a significant part of God’s work.

Any particularly memorable moments (during the SSC buildout or otherwise)?

During a meeting with Joliet’s Economic Development Committee about industrial areas to consider for SSC, I recommended a retail location (knowing this is an oversupplied category of real estate), but it wasn’t until later in the meeting that someone mentioned Harvest Bible Chapel’s building on Larkin had extra space that may be worth inquiring about, even though it wasn’t on the market. Without this idea, we would have missed our very special opportunity.

Fun fact about yourself:

I randomly met my childhood idol, author-explorer Thor Heyerdahl (Kon-Tiki expedition), while hiking on the island of Tenerife [the largest of the Canary Islands, off the west coast of Africa], establishing a friendship until his passing.
More than a dozen food trucks fed the appetites of runners and attendees of all ages after each race, with menus featuring various cuisine such as gourmet grilled cheese, tacos and empanadas, donuts and coffee, lobster rolls and more.

Participants who raised over $250 enjoyed an exclusive new perk this year—the Kellogg’s VIP area—an exclusive place to sit and relax post-race and enjoy Kellogg’s treats and an iced tea and hot chocolate bar from Panera Bread.

Thanks to all our sponsors, volunteers and more than 2,000 participants who joined us for our annual Foodie 5Ks in Wheaton (April 7) and Libertyville (May 12).

In total, the Foodie 5Ks raised more than $381,000 and nearly $1.3 million in groceries for our hungry neighbors.

In addition to enjoying a traditional afternoon tea, attendees enjoyed live music from a string duet and bid on items from the extensive silent auction.

Bill Shores of Shores Garden Consulting discussed designing with edibles, and space-efficient gardening systems for urban and suburban environments.

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Miss the first two Foodie 5Ks? It’s not too late to get in on the action! Register before Aug. 27 to get your official race swag for the Foodie 5K at Lewis University on September 15!
SEPTEMBER

Foodie 5K Lewis University
Saturday, September 15 – 9 a.m.
Lewis University, Romeoville
Join us for our final Foodie 5K of the 2018 season at Lewis University to celebrate the start of Fall! Register before August 31 to receive an official race shirt. To learn more, visit www.SolveHungerToday.org/Foodie5K.

Hunger Action Month (All Month)
Help us bring awareness to the issue of hunger during Hunger Action Month by wearing orange, holding a food and fund drive, or starting a conversation about hunger. Contact Teresa Schryver at tschryver@northernilfoodbank.org to learn how you or your group can get involved!

OCTOBER

Stars & Cars
Wednesday, October 10 – 6:00-10:00 p.m.
Join us at Steve Foley Bentley, Cadillac, Rolls-Royce of Northbrook for our 6th annual Stars and Cars event. Mingle with Honorary Chairs Brian McCaskey and Steve Foley and other local celebrities amongst luxury vehicles while supporting the Food Bank’s feeding programs. For more info or to get involved, visit https://solvehunertoday.org/signatureevents or contact Kate Thomas at kthomas@northernilfoodbank.org or at (630) 443-6910 ext. 117.

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

Upcoming Activities

20th Annual Hunger Scramble
Tuesday, August 21 – 8:30 a.m. shotgun start
Cantigny Golf, Wheaton
Reserve your place in our 20th annual Hunger Scramble golf outing presented by West Suburban Bank. Enjoy a day on the green and join us following the round for a 19th Hole Awards Reception in the clubhouse. For more information about sponsorship or volunteer opportunities or to register your foursome, please contact Kate Thomas at kthomas@northernilfoodbank.org or at (630) 443-6910 ext. 117.

SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR 2018 EVENTS!

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