



YOUR GIFTS MATTER

Impact Report | July – December 2021

Dear Friends,

Your support continues to make such meaningful change in our community. Thanks to your remarkable generosity, we have been able to reimagine and innovate the way we serve our neighbors. In this impact report we are pleased to share the progress we have made towards our goals of Strategic Plan UNITE. By uniting together, we are distributing nutritious food equitably, with dignity and convenience across our 13-county service area.

While we are extremely grateful for all we have accomplished together, the past six months have brought new, additional challenges.

As government food resources drastically decline and supply chain disruption causes food prices to skyrocket, our donated food from retailers and manufacturers is more important now than ever before. Planning for the ebb and flow of demand at our food distributions is yet another challenge for our team and member agencies. And although we were heartened to see shorter lines over the summer following the peak in demand in late 2020, in recent months attendance at our distributions has once again increased and we must quickly pivot to ensure we have enough food for our member agencies and direct-to-neighbor distributions.

The consistent and committed support of our volunteers at our centers and at our outside distributions is inspiring. We are still operating our shifts at reduced capacity and I have every confidence that as we are able to increase our numbers, our dedicated volunteers will be there to answer the call.

You may have seen the Food Bank in several high-profile media stories in recent months. I am most excited about this increased awareness because we want every neighbor to know how to find food and access other resources available to them. The more we can normalize using our network, the easier it becomes for every person to ask for help.

Our neighbors are at the center of the work we are doing with Strategic Plan UNITE. We are thankful that you continue to provide the necessary gifts of food, funds and time that enable us to make our shared vision a reality: *For everyone in Northern Illinois to have the food they need to thrive.*

Gratefully,

Julie Yurko
President & CEO
Northern Illinois Food Bank



38M MEALS PROVIDED

338

mobile markets

62K

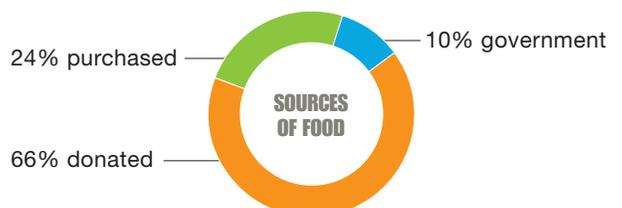
volunteer hours

310K

neighbors (duplicated)
served monthly

11K

DoorDash grocery
home deliveries





Meet Maria

Maria's story is like so many others the Food Bank has been hearing the past two years. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Maria and her husband found themselves facing food insecurity for the first time.

The 51-year-old grandmother, who is caring for her two grandchildren, ages 13 and 11, struggles to make crucial decisions: should she pay rent or utilities? And how would she put food on the table?

She turned to Northern Illinois Food Bank and the Church of Holy Spirit Food Pantry for assistance, which relieved her worries of feeding her family. Twice a month she visits the food pantry, which is not far from her home in Waukegan. She picks up the groceries she needs: eggs, vegetable oil, chicken, salt, canned spices, and other necessities.

"It is a big help especially 'cuz they don't only have food. They have cleaning supplies, personal care supplies, toilet paper, so that helps a lot too."

She enjoys her visits to the food pantry, where she is treated with dignity and respect.

"I am welcomed every time I'm here. The volunteers ... they are really nice. They're good listeners," she said. "It's like visiting a friend."

Maria also gives back by volunteering for an Elder Care program in Waukegan. She shops at the food pantry for her senior neighbor, sometimes bringing her along on visits. "I read the food [labels] for her. I'm taking food to her this weekend."

She shares with us why the pantry and Food Bank are critical.

"It's not only help for me, but for the whole community. There are more people in need – in big, big need."

That's why Maria is spreading the word about how to get groceries. "I think it is very important to help these places around our community." 🍌

➔ *If you know a neighbor or family member who can benefit from visiting one of our pantries or distributions, please direct them to our website where they can enter their zip code and find resources close to home:*
www.SolveHungerToday.org/get-help

STRATEGIC PLAN UNITE PROGRESS



Engage our Network

- Opened our first hospital-based food pantry at Riverside Medical Center in Kankakee
- Awarded \$727K in capacity building grants to our member agencies to increase distribution and neighbor outreach
- Launched a comprehensive agency capacity survey to determine needs and set a goal for 75% of agencies to implement a neighbor-centered practice



Empower our Neighbors

- Increased choice in distribution models by offering indoor shopping, drive through distributions and home delivery at our Winnebago Community Market
- Launched digital advertising for My Pantry Express and increased orders by 87%
- Expanded DoorDash partnership to service four locations, offering home delivery to an average of 700 neighbors per week



Enhance Food Supply

- 69% of food distributed classified as Foods2Encourage, including 26% fresh produce
- Incorporated neighbor feedback to source more preferred foods which increased produce options for My Pantry Express and increased products with accessible packaging and vegan options



Embrace Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- Enhanced understanding of DEI through monthly education webinars for team and Unconscious Bias training for member agencies
- Incorporated DEI into our hiring process through interview questions and expanded our recruitment of diverse candidates



Evolve the Food Bank

- Heightened awareness through local and national media coverage of the Food Bank with more than 600M impressions
- Signed lease to move North Suburban Center from Park City to larger facility in Lake Forest that will accommodate more volunteers, additional food donations, and enhance the member agency shopping area