

Greater Cleveland Food Bank
COVID-19 Update
Week of June 1– June 5, 2020: Week in Review

This week was a tough one – not going to sugar coat it. We’ve seen the racism and violence against our brethren of color far too many times and for far too many years. And once again, it was even more horrific than one could imagine as we watched the senseless killing of George Floyd as it happened. Scenes like this can’t be hidden any longer and the whole world is watching us. On Monday, our staff directors team met for a long planned all day zoom meeting today to talk through potential expansion plans, progress against our 2020 goals, kick off our annual budget process, etc. Frankly, even though the discussion of this was so rich and meaningful and critical to our future, it was hard to concentrate. We turned to the tragedy of the weekend and had a long and important conversation about the systemic racism that have made protests across our nation necessary and our role in being advocates and allies with our Black American clients, colleagues and community. We had colleagues share their feelings and experiences, their daily fears for their families, children and themselves – something that many of us would never experience because we are white. We came together and talked and developed a strong statement about what we as an organization are committing to and stand for.

So, with that as the backdrop to our week, we knew that we had to do our job – provide nourishing food to our agencies and our community. For us, it was the first week of getting meals out for our Summer Feeding Programs – an opportunity to ensure that children in our community have food and that it be delivered to them in a safe manner. The pandemic has required changes to the way the food is delivered and consumed and as such, it is the driving force on how our program sites are working this summer as well as ways we are augmenting what they’re doing. Because we’ve had a few larger organizations scale back on their programs, we have become creative on what we can do to feed more kids. We will be sending out 2 of our mobile units each day to 12 locations (5 more in the offing) with 2 stops each. At each stop, we’ll be providing 2 lunches, 1 breakfast and a backpack to cover approximately 5 weekly meals for each child until the next week when we return. Our outreach team will be manning the trucks along with our summer Vistas. We have set protocols in place for the grab-n-go process to help with social distancing and keep it safe. We will be in Garfield Heights from 10:30 until 2:00PM every Wednesday and due to the large need in that community, we will send both trucks to them on that day.

Our outreach team continues to timely and kindly answer the phones, provide helpful information and be a friendly voice to our callers. This past week, we completed 405 calls, 242 home deliveries and provided food to 40 individuals who walked up to our truck which is parked in front of our building.

Our 12th drive thru distribution and the 10th at the Muni Lot was not without some drama. We learned late Wednesday afternoon that we’d be able to use that location. So, despite less than 24 hours’ notice and promotion, we were able to serve 1,100 households and 3,200 individuals. Thanks to the Guard and a wonderful group of volunteers, we once again provided nutritious food including beautiful produce and dairy boxes to our community. Next week, we’ve very excited that we’ll help our friends at Lakeland Community College for their first drive thru distribution.

We are thrilled to report that the mask campaign led by WKYC and Betsy Kling has collected over 6,000 re-usable masks for our agency partners and volunteers. The drive will continue for two more weeks – a huge thank you to all of our wonderful sewers who have stepped up to help keep our partners and volunteers safe!

The pandemic created havoc and changes with many plans and none more pertinent to us than the postponement of our Market at the Food Bank – the signature event of our Harvest for Hunger drive. But, due to the creativity and inventiveness of many volunteers and our staff, we have repurposed that event to Market at Home – a weeklong celebration – June 22 through June 26 -- of our culinary partners who have worked with us for years and now need our support and that of our community. Stay tuned for more info!

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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