

Greater Cleveland Food Bank
COVID-19 Update
April 15, 2020

Well, just as they warned us, the snow has come. We are still hoping for better weather Thursday as we are gearing up for another one of our drive-through distributions at the Muni Lot. We may have only done 4 of these types of distributions, but it feels like they are becoming part of a normal routine instead of a new and unexpected adventure. It's just one of the many ways our team has learned to become "comfortable with the uncomfortable."

We are so grateful to the Ohio State Patrol for volunteering at our distribution. They will be helping to check people in from their pre-registrations. And these distributions wouldn't be nearly as efficient without the help of the Cleveland Police Department directing traffic and the National Guard and Ohio Military Reserves helping to load food boxes into vehicles. We are thankful we will have their helping hands with us once again.

As our distributions continue to grow and we are seeing more people turning to emergency food resources for support, there has been one big question on everyone's mind – will we have enough food to keep up with the demand? Food donations from food industry partners have dropped significantly as the COVID-19 emergency has increased demand for food at retailers and reduced surplus food in the system, which is often donated to food banks. The good news is that the Food Bank has an amazing resourcing team that has been working diligently to purchase product from a variety of sources so we can continue to keep our warehouse stocked. For April, we have approximately 4 million pounds of food on order that is coming in throughout the month, plus another 4 million pounds for May, and 3.5 million pounds on order for June. We will continue to buy product to fill gaps and also work to bring in food from the State of Ohio and Federal Governments – both of whom have provided additional support to food banks during this crisis.

We normally distribute about 900,000 pounds of food a week, and this number is growing as we respond to this crisis, but we are working diligently to make sure our shelves are well stocked both in the short and long term. Because we have a good amount of fresh produce, and because it is so healthy for the clients we serve, we are including it in emergency boxes at our drive through distributions along with shelf-stable product. We are expecting an influx of new orders coming in to replenish our supply.

We are glad that we will be able to continue making this critical food available not only during our weekly distributions, but through our network of partner agencies. We still have 720 partners who are open and helping us to distribute food across Northeast Ohio. The amazing work of these food pantries, hot meal sites, churches, schools and other organizations are critical to helping meet the need for nutritious food in our local communities. **For anyone in need of assistance, please call our Help Center at 216-738-2067 to be connected to a food resource in your neighborhood.**

Beyond these important partners, we have a lot of other people and organizations who are helping to make this essential work possible. We want to thank a very important one – our grocery store partners. Grocery store workers are some of our heroes on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis, and they continue to go above and beyond to support our neighbors in need. Through the *Harvest for Hunger* campaign, Giant Eagle, Heinen's, Dave's Markets, Buehler's, and Fishers stores have helped to make over 6 million meals possible! You can join us in thanking them by signing our thank you card [here](#).

Even though we feel confident about having enough food in stock, purchasing all that food puts a big dent in our budget. We have seen an amazing community response already, but we still need help in order to ensure we can continue to provide meals to our neighbors. Today will be another big day, but we enter into it knowing we have the help of a great and strong community.

Focus on possibility and who can help and how. Leah Markovich, Grants Coordinator