

Greater Cleveland Food Bank
COVID-19 Update
Week of August 31 – September 4, 2020: Week in Review

We've made it to September! Where the time has gone remains a mystery, but across the country, food banks have begun to celebrate Hunger Action Month. Every September, Feeding America and our network of food banks participate in this month-long campaign to raise awareness of food insecurity in America and highlight ways for individuals everywhere to get involved in the fight against hunger.

This Hunger Action Month feels more important than ever as across the nation, the impacts of COVID-19 have increased the demand for emergency food services by 60%. In Ohio specifically, the number of people who now report they are food insecure has increased by more than 290,000 individuals since the onset of the pandemic. With more than 1.6 million Ohioans having filed for unemployment in the last 24 weeks, unfortunately, we know that the increased need for food resources will continue for months and even years to come as families in Northeast Ohio slowly recover from economic setbacks.

You can help us raise awareness about the importance of fighting hunger today and in the months ahead. We invite you to join us in taking action with our Hunger Action Month Challenge. Each week of September, we'll share a featured action you can take to help fight hunger and raise awareness including sending a card to a child in our Backpacks for Kids program or signing up for a virtual tour of the Food Bank. Thanks to a few wonderful donors, we'll be offering a prize each week such as a \$200 Dunkin' Gift Card. For each task you complete, you'll be entered to win one of these great prizes. For more information on how you can get involved, see the attached flyer or visit our website: www.greaterclevelandfoodbank.org/HungerActionMonth

And just in time for Hunger Action Month, the New York Times has published a story on how the pandemic has shaped hunger in America. Tim Arango, the NY Times reporter who wrote the story, actually visited one of the GCFB's distributions at Parma Senior High School to interview one of our clients. Mr. Arango captured the story of Terry McNamara who refers to these hard times as "the Great Depression with minivans" based on his experience waiting in long lines of cars at these distributions. Mr. McNamara comes to pick up food with his daughter and his five grandchildren where they receive food and a few storybooks. You can read the rest of this local family's story and the stories of families across the country [here in the NY Times article](#).

Our distributions continue to be an important part of the way we serve our community. This last week we had 2 distributions - one at Parma, which served a little over 900 families, and of course, our regular Muni Lot distribution, which served about 2,700 families (about 8,100 people). This was about 100 families more than we saw last week, and our team is preparing to serve even more in the weeks to come. As the number of cars lining up continues to grow, we continue to make tweaks to our distribution model to keep wait times down (last week we timed, we have it down to about 13 minutes), and make sure we have plenty of food on hand so that we can serve as many people as possible.

Our volunteers continue to do an amazing job of helping us prepare and host these distributions. This week we had 243 volunteers helping in our repack area, our kitchen and at our two distributions. In total they packed: 610 senior food boxes (21,350 lbs); 2,880 emergency food boxes (77,760 lbs); 3,355 lunches and 5,664 Backpacks each containing six child friendly meals. These volunteers continue to outdo themselves and set new records each week for the number of boxes packed in a shift. The power of our volunteers is truly unbelievable, and we are so grateful to have their helping hands! If you're interested in volunteering, visit <https://www.greaterclevelandfoodbank.org/volunteer>.

"It is only through labor and painful effort, by grim energy and resolute courage that we move on to better things" – Theodore Roosevelt

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