

Greater Cleveland Food Bank
COVID-19 Update
Week of May 18– May 22, 2020: Week in Review

When I was a kid I recall my mom saying that time seemed to fly by. I used to laugh at that and thought that everything just seemed to drag. But, as with most things in life, mom was right! Here it is Friday ... again. And, the start of summer given the Memorial Holiday which typically meant school was over, the neighborhood pool opened and the glorious summer months were beckoning adventure. Well, as we have said, adjusting to the new normal will be a challenge and that is especially true for kids. Many of their summer programs have been cancelled or will look a whole lot different. And, for all of us at the Food Bank, summer will bring new challenges. So, with that being said, let's take a look at this past week!

Hate to start with some not so good news but recently released data from the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics provides some sobering facts. But at least Ohio isn't at the top of any of the lists. The statewide unemployment data shows the following:

- National Unemployment: 14.7 percent
- New High Unemployment Rate for Ohio in April 2020: 16.8 percent
- Ohio's unemployment rate increased from 5.8 in March 2020 to 16.8 in April 2020
- Ohio lost nearly 824,000 jobs between March 2020 and April 2020

Given these numbers, we know that Ohioans are hurting and will continue to do so for months to come. We are mindful of the plight of our neighbors and community members and are continuing to get food out the door especially to our most vulnerable populations – kids and seniors. Akilah, one of our stalwarts on the Outreach team, provided the following earlier today (and this sounds just like her if she were here in person): *“Well here I go again...preaching to the choir....I am on PTO today but still answering my phone....Client just called in tears so grateful for the food box she received. She is a senior who doesn't drive and recently widowed...she fought back the tears thanking us for her box this morning....THIS IS WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO!!!! Have a blessed and safe weekend....”* This week we made 236 home deliveries. Our Help Center and Outreach team continues to field calls from folks in need – 565 completed calls.

Next week we'll begin preparing for and packing the grab-n-go lunches for kiddos in the Summer Feeding program. Each day, we get word of organizations wanting to participate and also of ones who can't this year. It is going to be different than years past and we are working to be helpful and resourceful as we know there will be many children who rely on this meal. We'll be using our outreach truck as well as our sprinter van to deliver grab-n-go meals to different locations throughout the city especially where there are no established program sites. Our kitchen continues to produce and turn out wonderful meals again this week: Kids' bagged lunches totaled 1,280. Agency hot meals came in at 2,202. For Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging senior meals partners, we provided 9,807 frozen meals, 6,396 hot meals and 547 cold and boxed meals.

Are you ready to take some action? The GCFB as well as the eleven other food banks making up the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, have been incredibly grateful for support from the Ohio National Guard throughout this pandemic. But currently, federal funding is only in place to keep the Guard deployed through June 24, 2020. **We urgently need an extension of funding for the Ohio National Guard to continue to assist food banks and the millions of Ohioans we serve. You can help by reaching out to your Members of Congress and asking them to urge President Trump to extend the federal funding authorization to the National Guard Response. The incredible uptick in demand will not cease to exist on June 25, 2020 – and the unemployment data above supports this.** Ceasing the federal funding for the National Guard's COVID-19 support operations will weaken our ability to keep food going out to our neighbors who need us more than ever. This extension is critical to ensuring the continued health and safety of our community. **Please act now!**

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead

Have a good weekend! *Mary LaVigne Butler, VP of External Affairs*