

Greater Cleveland Food Bank
COVID-19 Update
May 21, 2020

If it's Thursday and Cleveland, then another of our drive thru distributions took place at the City's Muni Lot. It is our 10th drive thru distribution and it was the first where rain was NOT in the forecast – nor did we experience gale force winds! Sunny and a wonderful way to greet our neighbors. Each household that attended received a box of shelf stable product and a box of fresh produce – just in time for the holiday weekend. Today, we had over 1,500 households receive emergency food which equates to over 4,500 individuals. Many of the cars displayed thank you cards in their window. Once again, things ran smoothly with the assistance of the National Guard – we can't thank them enough for their help in directing traffic and loading boxes. The Ohio Highway Patrol was also on hand. We were very excited to welcome back the helping hands of Food Bank volunteers who signed up quickly once the opportunity was made available. We are thrilled to have volunteers back with us again and look forward to seeing more of them. Once again, thanks to DJ Brent from B Productions, we had lots of great music to keep everyone in good spirits and some fancy footwork was also observed. We even heard that a certain Tiff was line dancing with the Guard – we'd pay for a photo of that! Shout out to Fox 8 for their coverage of the distribution. Their morning show also called out the distribution – we are very appreciative of this as it helps remind people of this event.

The Governor's press conference today addressed a variety of openings and more. The Governor also shared an update on the work of the 41-person **Minority Health Strike Force**. In April, the Minority Health Strike Force was formed to develop several specific COVID-19 recommendations focused on how communities of color are more likely to have underlying health conditions, less access to healthcare, and discrimination when accessing healthcare services. The Governor stated it is his job to help protect the safety of all of our communities. He noted that as a state, we have an obligation to be mindful in our response to helping those at higher risk. To help the State better meet public health needs going forward, a new high-level position at the Ohio Department of Health was created: Deputy Director of Social Determinants of Health and Opportunity. In the past few years, the Food Bank has made a concerted effort to focus on social determinants of health and how nutritious food is part of that equation. Through our Food as Medicine Initiative, we are working to provide healthy nutritious food to low income clients diagnosed with food related health challenges. At this time, it is more important than ever to make sure we provide nutritious food to our community. With the summer rapidly approaching, our summer feeding program will be critical to ensure that children in our community have meals available that can be easily accessed.

Helping members of our community access food is critical to what we do. Often times, we hear that people, especially seniors, don't know where to turn or are embarrassed to say they need help. And, during this pandemic, the need is more pronounced but there is also fear about going out of the house or being with strangers. Our Help Center is a wonderful resource for so many individuals who just need help, a friendly voice to answer questions and help them sign up for benefits. Prior to COVID, our Help Center fielded on average 100 calls a day. In March, one week they fielded almost 3,500 calls in one week. The patience and kindness of our Help Center Specialists calms callers' fears and helps them secure food. As a result of these conversations, our staff realized that home delivery of meals for many seniors was critical and it needed to happen. Thanks to these calls and the National Guard, we began providing home deliveries. During the week of May 10, we delivered over 280 meals. Because of enhancements made to our phone system, we are able to handle more calls, be more efficient and time in the que plummeted.

This morning, at our Supervisors Meeting, we saw a powerful video – *The Stockdale Paradox*. This concept was initially presented by Jim Collins in his book, *Good to Great*. It was named after Admiral James Stockdale, a prisoner of the war in Vietnam. The main message of this is that you need to balance realism with optimism. During his captivity, Admiral Stockdale was repeatedly tortured and had no reason to think he'd make it out alive. He found a way to survive by embracing both the harshness of his situation with a balance of healthy optimism. The short but powerful video brought home the point – hoping for the best but preparing for the worst. A lesson to think about at this time.

“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.” Reverend Martin Luther King Junior

Focus on possibility and who can help and how. Mary LaVigne-Butler, VP External Affairs