

Winter 2020

FOOD — for — THOUGHT



Greater Cleveland
Food Bank

Celebrating 40 Years of Fighting Hunger in Our Community

Thanks to your compassion and generosity, we are reaching more neighbors in need than ever before!

As we celebrated our 40th anniversary last year, we looked back upon the growth from our humble beginnings in 1979 to our record-breaking accomplishments in 2019. **And it's all thanks to the kindness of friends like you!**

But we aren't content to just let things stay as they are. Our strategic plan is now in its second year, and we are as focused as ever on reaching even more children, individuals, families, and seniors in need. Take a look at how the Greater Cleveland Food Bank is working to end hunger in our community – and how you are partnering with us!

➤ GOAL 1

Addressing hunger today by providing nutritious food and targeted programming to reach more people who experience food insecurity.

➤ GOAL 2

Addressing hunger tomorrow by connecting people to supportive services to help them become more food secure.

➤ GOAL 3

Improving access and outcomes for people we serve by better tracking success.

➤ GOAL 4

Assessing and creating financial and organizational capacity to meet mission-related goals.

Since I've found the Food Bank and this pantry, I am able to meet my bills.

- Senior from Eastlake Senior Center, shared during a focus group



(continued on page 3)



Food For Thought

Kristin Warzocha
President & CEO

Many of the clients we see in the wintertime are having to make choices between necessities like food and utilities – a choice no one should have to make.

We recently wrapped up our 40th anniversary celebration, and it was a wonderful opportunity to recognize many of the people who helped make our organization what it is today. Our 40 Faces of the Food Bank Campaign shared the stories of some of our founders, volunteers, donors, partner agencies, and staff from over the years. At the end of our Annual Meeting & Volunteer Recognition Event in October, we revealed the 40th face: you. Everyone in the room received a mirror because we wanted them to be able to reflect back on themselves and the role they play in feeding our community. **Since supporters like you make this extraordinary work possible**, we wanted to ensure our whole community was included in the celebration.

It was also a reminder that we have a responsibility to continue to work hard to provide compassionate, effective, and dedicated service **for the next 40 years**, or as long as we are needed. **We know that there are about 550,000 people in our six-county service area who are eligible for our services and about 350,000 people receiving help from the Food Bank and our many partners.** As we enter the second year of our current strategic plan (2019-2021), we're working hard to close that gap.

Your support is especially critical during our cold winters here in Northeast Ohio. As heating bills go up, that expense stretches already tight budgets for a lot of people. Many of the clients we see in the wintertime are having to make choices between necessities like food and utilities – a choice no one should have to make. We want to ensure we have nutritious food available so children, families, seniors, and individuals don't go hungry this winter.

I'm so grateful for friends and supporters like you. You are truly putting healthy meals on the table for people in our community who need them. I was out recently at a local elementary school – a partner in both our Backpack for Kids and School Market programs. It was Friday, so the kids were getting their backpacks of food for the weekend and taking home fresh produce through the School Market. I met a little girl named Madison, who was beyond excited to show me what was in her backpack, and couldn't believe her good luck, she got to take home two bags of food in one day. Her excitement reminded me of my own kids – who are around the same age – and their excitement on Christmas morning. That's going to stick with me for a long time.

You may never meet the people you are helping, but stories like this happen every day. And they only happen with your continued support. Thank you for caring and helping us to eliminate hunger throughout our communities and neighborhoods!

With gratitude,



Fighting Hunger in Our Community (continued from page 1)

Your support helped ...



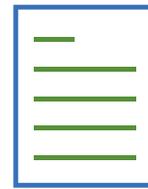
serve 350,000 neighbors, more than 50% being children and seniors



increase access to nutritious food for people with diet-related health issues



distribute 47 million pounds of food – 21.4 million pounds was fresh produce



33,624 people completed SNAP applications



12,062 of our neighbors connect to resources to address the root causes of hunger

In 2019, our new Research & Program Evaluation Team and Board-Level Measurement & Outcomes Committee were established to help us better understand:

- Who we are serving
- Who we are missing
- How we can help our neighbors move toward long-term food security

As we look ahead to the future, we are also evaluating possible expansion and how we will need to grow and adapt to meet the increased demand for our services. Work has begun to assess the capacity of our current facility, so stay tuned for more updates in the near future.

Every single one of these accomplishments simply would not be possible without the continued support of friends like you. YOU are the reason we made great strides last year, and why we have hope and excitement about everything that will be done in 2020.

Please accept our deepest thanks for everything you do to ensure food gets into the hands of people in our community who need it most. As we look ahead to what the next 40 years has in store, we are thankful to have loyal friends like you partnering with us in our mission to end hunger in Northeast Ohio. Thank you!

Thanks to caring friends like you ...



Our kitchen makes 8X more meals than when we moved into our facility 15 years ago



The amount of fresh produce distributed has increased 7X



The Silent Struggle of Working Families



Courtney never imagined she would have to visit her local food pantry to pick up groceries for her family. **But when times got tough and she heard about a pantry partner of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, Courtney was grateful for the assistance.**

She said, "Usually, the beginning of the month is harder to make ends meet. We've got bigger bills at the first of the month than we do at the end. Sometimes we pay our bills and don't have any money for groceries, so I have to come to the food pantry."

Courtney is especially concerned about keeping plenty of food on hand for her growing son, who will turn four in July. He doesn't understand why it's hard to buy groceries, and Courtney has even had to make the choice to go without food just so her son can have something to eat.

She's also made the difficult decision between paying for necessities like utilities or gas, and buying food. She said, "Sometimes we buy food and my husband doesn't have gas money for our car to get to work. He works an hour away at a restaurant."

Though she doesn't like the idea of leaving her young son and childcare is expensive, Courtney is trying to find a job so she can help pay for some of their expenses. "I'm looking for a job because my husband isn't making enough for our household income. I've been looking for somewhere I can put in an application to get a job for just a couple of days a week."

Courtney is extremely grateful for the kindness of friends like you, who ensure food is available in her time of need.

"I'd just like to thank whoever actually donates food for the people that come and get it," she said. "We really need it. Thank you."



Sometimes we pay our bills and don't have any money for groceries, so I have to come to the food pantry.



Courtney can't bear the thought of her 3-year-old son going hungry. But thanks to you, she can keep food on the table for her family!

The sad reality is that Courtney is not alone. There are far too many families here in Northeast Ohio where at least one person in the household works, but it simply isn't enough to cover their expenses. Thank you for caring about struggling children and families in our community, and for giving generously to help end hunger!

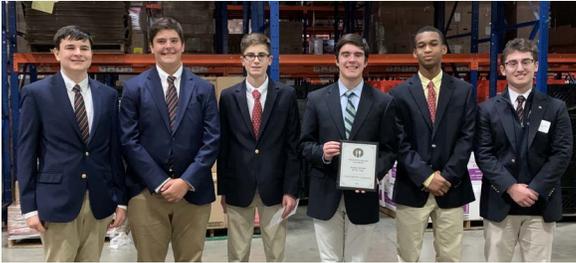
Recognizing Our 2019 Volunteers of the Year

Thank you to these organizations and individuals who so generously donated their time and talents!



It is no exaggeration to say that the work of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank would not be possible without the selfless dedication of our wonderful volunteers. That's why we would like

to recognize the two organizations and one special individual who were honored as our 2019 Volunteers of the Year.



School Partner of the Year: University School

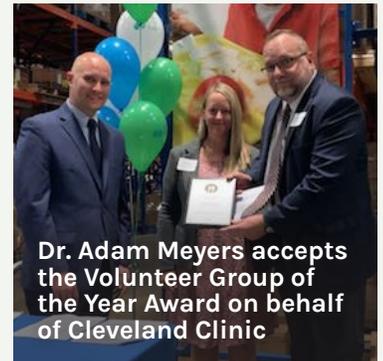
During our past fiscal year, no school responded more strongly to our mission than University School. More than 200 volunteers spent time assisting us on-site through more than 20 different service projects, including groups from the Upper and Middle schools, sports teams, groups of staff members, and individuals completing school service requirements. Outside of volunteering, **students and staff raised more than \$2,400 to help our cause – the equivalent of nearly 10,000 meals.** Students as young as seven years old through high school eagerly and energetically supported the work of the Food Bank. Thank you University School!



University School students and staff accept their 2019 Volunteer Award

Volunteer Group of the Year: Cleveland Clinic

Last year, the Cleveland Clinic implemented its Community Service Time Off program (CSTO) through which each Clinic staff member is eligible for up to four hours of paid volunteer work each year. The Food Bank was fortunate to be chosen as a partner for the pilot of this program. Over the past year, we've had more than 1,400 Clinic staff members, or 6% of our total volunteer base, donate more than 4,300 hours of their time to assist on many different projects. **The Food Bank is honored to have been included as a partner site in this initiative from day one, and we're excited to see how it grows in the coming years!**



Dr. Adam Meyers accepts the Volunteer Group of the Year Award on behalf of Cleveland Clinic



Ann Aber (Trustee) & Matt Jackson (Volunteer Experience Manager) with Vicki Adamus, 2019 Volunteer of the Year

Volunteer of the Year for 2019: Vicki Adamus

Last year, Vicki went above and beyond to contribute to the mission of the Food Bank. She donated more than 250 hours of her time on projects, such as setting up shop in our Food Bank Kitchen to record the cook times of our kitchen's frozen meals, covering the front desk for both our receptionist and the Volunteer team, preparing countless pieces of mail to help our Development team, and supporting our kitchen staff with various tasks. **Thank you for serving with a smile wherever you are needed, Vicki. We are so thankful for you!**



This Single Mom is Grateful for Friends Like You!

Altrovese is a single mom who also grew up with a single mom, so she wants to provide the best possible future for her two teenage daughters. That's why she sends her younger daughter to one of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank's program partners that provides educational programming, as well as after-school snacks at their Kids Cafe.

Altrovese's daughter was diagnosed with gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) last May, so she can't eat a lot of the school lunches. But she eats the after-school snack, and she's excited to try healthier and different foods, asking, "Mom, today we had this, and it was so good. Oh my goodness, can we buy some for the house?"

Altrovese has turned to the Food Bank for help in the past, and she is thankful she is doing well and not in need of food pantry assistance right now. "Getting employment and budgeting — making sure that we have what we need, versus what we want — has helped."

She works third shift so she can be around for her daughters during the day. "I try to sleep while they're at school during the day, but I have other stuff to do, too. I just grab naps here and there. It's a struggle, but you have to learn how to balance."

When my daughter gets home, she's okay. She's able to tidy up, or do what she needs to do, without being focused on 'I'm hungry.' Thank you for that support."

This hard-working mom has big dreams for her two girls.

"My hopes and dreams are that they go to college or choose a career path they feel passionate about," she said, smiling. "Something they love to do, so they will be able to retire one day and not have to struggle. I want to be able to give them what I didn't have, as far as college, without them being stressed. I just want them to be on a path to success."

Altrovese knows the lessons her daughter learns, as well as the healthy foods she receives, are making a big difference for her family. She is grateful for the compassion of dedicated supporters like you, who help relieve some of the burdens of caring for two young girls on her own.

"I want to say thank you, because you help me not to have to rush to cook dinner. When my daughter gets home, she's okay. She's able to tidy up, or do what she needs to do, without being focused on 'I'm hungry.' Thank you for that support."

Just Trying to Get By

Sometimes things are tough for Faunita — especially when her limited budget runs out. That's why she is grateful for the Greater Cleveland Food Bank and their support of her local food pantry.

Faunita has relied on the assistance of the Food Bank for many years. "I've used them since my kids were little," she said. **It was a lifesaver for her to know that she could turn to her local food pantry for help when times were hard**, so she could still serve nourishing meals to her children and family.

And though Faunita's kids are grown and she now lives alone, it can still be difficult to keep enough food on hand for her basic needs.

"I visit the food pantry when I'm running low on food. I don't get enough food stamps ... they only cover about three weeks."

Though she knows the assistance is available all the time, Faunita tries to only go get help when she really needs it. She said, "I just go to them when I'm really out of everything."

It's also a challenge for Faunita to get to the food pantry due to transportation issues. "I don't have a ride," she said. "The buses don't come by where I live, and they run at different times. It's just a big hassle."

The day we met Faunita, she was able to visit the pantry because she had borrowed a friend's truck. She was excited to get the fresh produce and nutritious foods that she couldn't otherwise afford.

"The Food Bank helps a lot. If it weren't for you, a bunch of people would be starving. It isn't just me, a lot of people would be going hungry. Thank you for helping us."

Your support is the reason people throughout Northeast Ohio can get the nourishing food they need to thrive and maintain their health. Thank you for caring!

The Food Bank helps a lot. If it weren't for you, a bunch of people would be starving. It isn't just me, a lot of people would be going hungry. Thank you for helping us.



Faunita doesn't know how she would have enough to eat if it weren't for the kindness of Food Bank supporters like you.

Leaving a Lasting Legacy



Jon and Laurenda were looking for something meaningful to do after they retired, and one of the organizations where they chose to volunteer is the Greater Cleveland Food Bank. For them, the decision to help feed their hungry neighbors was simple.

"It comes back to my feeling about people going hungry," Jon said. "There's so much food around, I don't understand why we have this issue. The Food Bank makes it possible for us to help and do good in a meaningful way. I can directly make an impact, even if it's a small one."

Each month, at the Food Bank's monthly on-site produce distribution, which hands out fresh fruits and vegetables to people and families from many local communities, you can see Jon and Laurenda's smiling faces. Laurenda volunteers as a cart runner, helping guests fill their carts and take it to their vehicles. Jon helps by registering guests on the computer.

Laurenda recalls a recent experience where she was extremely moved by her conversation with a client. She said, "When I was escorting a woman to her car with a cart of fresh produce, she told me her income had been abruptly cut. The people in the Food Bank's Help Center provided assistance to help her drastically reduce her heating and water bill. She was weeping with gratitude and relief ... she had no idea this kind of help was available."

It was experiences like these that convinced them to include the Food Bank in their estate planning. In addition to caring for their three children and two grandchildren, Jon and Laurenda made the decision to name the Greater Cleveland Food Bank as the only non-family beneficiary in their will.

"Including the Food Bank in our will is a reflection and expression of how we feel about the importance of the work being done here. It didn't require a lot of thought for us to choose to leave this gift and support the Food Bank even after we are gone. It may be just a small gift, but it's important to us," Jon said. Laurenda echoes his sentiments. "It is a very rewarding experience to be able to help like that," she said with a smile. "This really is a special place."

Thank you to everyone who has partnered with us in our life-changing work to fight hunger in Northeast Ohio!

Including the Food Bank in our will is a reflection and expression of how we feel about the importance of the work being done here.

You can include the Greater Cleveland Food Bank in your estate plans by sharing this sample bequest language with your attorney:

"I give, devise, and bequeath to the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, tax identification number 34-1292848, 15500 South Waterloo Road, Cleveland Ohio, 44110 (insert percentage, amount, or nature of gift, or remainder of estate) to be used for programs and services that fight hunger."

This information is not professional tax or legal advice. Please consult an advisor about your specific situation. If you have any questions, you, your attorney, or your financial advisors are invited to contact our Senior Manager of Donor Relations, Kristen Glazer, at kglazer@clevelandfoodbank.org or 216.738.2056.



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