



Food For Thought



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September | 2020

OUR RESPONSE TO COVID-19

A global pandemic was not part of anyone's plan this year. However, we at the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank are proud of how our staff, agency partners, volunteers, and countless community organizations and individuals have stepped up to tackle the challenges these last six months have thrown at us.

Here are just a few of the things we've accomplished together since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020:

- Quickly moved our volunteer packing off-site to a larger location to allow for social distancing among our volunteers
- Distributed **nearly 200,000 crisis response boxes** filled with healthy, non-perishable food items
- Distributed more than **36 million pounds** of food equating to more than 30 million meals
- Rescued more than 10 million pounds of food that would have otherwise gone to waste and worked with **new programs such as the USDA's Farmers to Families program** and **Operation BBQ Relief** to distribute rescued food to those in need
- Worked with our partner agencies to set up new distribution procedures, including **curbside pick-ups**. The majority of our local partners persevered with their distributions and food assistance, providing healthy food and a glimmer of hope for thousands of families in the face of fear and uncertainty
- Served more than **200,000 individuals per month**, up from the 135,000 that relied on the Food Bank prior to March

The outpouring of support from the community is incredible. Thousands of generous individuals and companies are

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AN OFFICER FROM THE ROSS TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT HELPS OUT AT A FOOD DISTRIBUTION AT ONE OF OUR LOCAL PARTNER AGENCIES.



PA DEPT. OF HUMAN SERVICES SECRETARY TERESA MILLER (RIGHT) AND HER STAFF RECENTLY VOLUNTEERED THEIR TIME PACKING BOXES AT OUR OFF-SITE PACKING FACILITY.

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JAVA WITH JOE

Dear Friends of the Food Bank,

September, our annual Hunger Action Month, has arrived this year during one of the most challenging times in living memory, in our mission and beyond. As you know, our Food Bank has been operating at record-breaking levels to keep up with the increased demand for food assistance brought on by the COVID-19 crisis. From March through the end of August, you helped provide our neighbors with **more than 10 million extra meals** compared to the same six-month period last year! In each of these months, the extra volume represented 40% to 50% more food than prior to the pandemic. This astounding level of life-sustaining assistance could not have happened without our amazing agencies and other partners, courageous volunteers, remarkable donors, and

of course, our dedicated Food Bank Team. We simply cannot thank you enough!

As we honor Hunger Action Month amidst the continuing economic challenges caused by the pandemic, it is fitting that we recommit to our Bold Goal of ensuring that all Central Pennsylvanians have enough nutritious food every day to live healthy lives.

During the crisis, we have made advancements toward our Bold Goal, like instituting a warehouse night shift and an immense offsite packing operation to enable our volunteers and staff to double food box production under intense safety protocols. Together with our agencies and other partners, we will carry forward many crisis innovations that have enhanced our core capabilities.

With all of this said, please know that our Food Bank family grieves for our neighbors lost to COVID-19 and for the many others whose lives or livelihoods have been devastated by this crisis. We pledge to do everything we can to keep hunger at bay as our communities recover, and we will do this for as long as it takes, be it months or years. We can say this with confidence because of your support, Friends, and because we know that we are always **Better Together**.

HUNGER ACTION MONTH

September is Hunger Action Month, a nationwide campaign to mobilize the public to action on the issue of hunger in our communities. This year, it's

even more important to bring attention to these issues as millions have lost their jobs in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis and are facing food insecurity for the very first time.

There are many ways you can help us Give Hope and End Hunger throughout September.

Advocate: Join our advocacy network for updates and action alerts about anti-hunger policies. Contact your lawmakers on key issues.

Participate: Get social. Post about what you're doing to help end hunger this month whether it is by donating, volunteering, or



contacting elected officials. Don't forget to tag us and use #HungerActionMonth.

Donate: Make a donation today and make an even bigger impact in your community. A donation of just \$10 helps us provide 60 meals to children, families, seniors and veterans struggling with hunger.

Whether it is by advocating, raising awareness, making donations or volunteering, we can all end hunger, one helping a time.

To learn more about our advocacy efforts, please email Ryan Prater, community engagement associate at rprater@centralpafoodbank.org

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: HELPING HANDS

Peg Huyck is as bright and cheery as the yellow paint on the walls of her food pantry, Helping Hands, a partner agency of the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank. A woman dedicated to her work and the people in her community, Peg welcomes all to her food pantry.

As a single mother who worked in a shoe factory, she is familiar with the struggles that come with living paycheck to paycheck. **“I was working hard and struggling, and that’s an awful feeling, to just have your head above water,” Peg says.**

Both her personal experience and hearing of the need in her local community spurred Peg to open a food pantry. When her granddaughter was in sixth grade, she asked her mother what free and reduced lunches were, since many of the students in her class received them. As a result of this conversation, Peg decided she needed to do something to serve the need in her community.



PEG HUYCK OF HELPING HANDS, A PARTNER AGENCY OF THE CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA FOOD BANK.

At the time, Peg owned a consignment shop, so she dedicated a shelf in that store to keeping food that anyone in need could have. “We just emptied our shelves, our pantries at home, and put the food on the shelf in our consignment store,” Peg remembers.

Today, Helping Hands is in its own building and serves numerous families in the Wyalusing area. During the summer months, they typically make up a total of 90 backpacks for kids as part of the summer feeding program. However, this year, they made about 200 bags per week due to the restrictions placed on summer camps due to COVID-19. Peg welcomes this increase by saying, “That’s why we’re here. I think people are thankful there’s a place they can come to and depend on.”

Despite the trials that come with the job, so many clients that come into Helping Hands have touched Peg. Although the pantry now does curbside pick-up only, Peg still shares a heartwarming story. An elderly woman who lives close to the pantry would come every 2-3 months. When Helping Hands volunteers started delivering to seniors during the pandemic, she was on their list. Every week, she would leave an envelope with \$5 in it for the volunteer to take back, as a way to give back. When the volunteer didn’t take the money, she met him on the porch and demanded he take the money. When Peg received the envelope, she was amazed and humbled to see that there was \$5 for every week that Helping Hands had been delivering to the woman.

Peg is so grateful for the partnership Helping Hands has with the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank. She says **the Food Bank is, “looking out for us ... which is really awesome. I know they’re working hard to partner with other places so that we get good food, which is truly amazing.** They’re doing a wonderful job,” she says. “We certainly couldn’t do what we do without the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank.”

HUNGER ISN’T SELECTIVE: MEET BECKY

Becky, a mother of two children, takes each day and the struggles that come in stride. When COVID-19 shut down Pennsylvania in March, Becky and her husband lost a significant source of income from the apartment buildings they rent out. Renters have been unable to pay their rent, so money has become tight for Becky’s family.

“Not being able to receive rent has been our biggest issue, but I’m also disabled. I had a brain tumor two years ago, so I am unable to work. That’s another difficult situation with little ones.

During surgery for the tumor, doctors cut Becky’s auditory and balance nerves, which left her deaf in her right ear. With Becky unable to work, and the loss of income from their rentals, her family’s funds have been limited, making it difficult to purchase all the necessary groceries. **However, through the help of the Food Bank, the local school and the summer feeding programs they offer, Becky has been able to access healthy foods and save money.**

“It’s been very helpful,” Becky says of the Food Bank. “Our grocery list has gone down and we’ve been able to spend the extra money on things, like larger packages of toilet paper or other basics.”

Becky says she was nervous to come to the food distribution at first. When she decided to come, she was surprised by the help she received.

“We didn’t come right away,” she said. “It was one of those things where we’ve never had to do anything like this before. We wondered if people would look at us driving through the line. However, it’s been very helpful.”

In addition to the packed lunches the school provides for the kids, fresh boxes of produce from the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank are also available for families to take home. These boxes feed the whole family and as Becky said, “it’s not only the kids, but the whole family that benefits.”



BECKY AND HER CHILDREN ARRIVE AT A MOBILE FOOD DISTRIBUTION AT A PARTNER AGENCY.

BETTER TOGETHER: FEDEX FREIGHT HELPS DISTRIBUTE MILLIONS OF POUNDS FOOD

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, when Pennsylvania went into lockdown and more than a million lost their jobs overnight, demand for charitable food skyrocketed. The Food Bank's operations team knew it would need extra help to distribute extra food to our partner agencies, other Pennsylvania food banks, and those facing food insecurity, many for the first time.

That's when the team at FedEx Freight in Harrisburg stepped in. They immediately began helping us move emergency food boxes at no cost through the FedEx Freight charitable giving program.

"The North Harrisburg team knows that the local food bank plays a huge role in the fight against hunger in the local community, and we are always looking to deliver to those in need," Matt Suter, Assistant Service Center Manager for FedEx Freight's North Harrisburg service center, said. "During a tough time, our team saw it as an opportunity to play a part in helping those in need during this pandemic."

Over the next several weeks, **the FedEx team delivered more than 13 million pounds of food from the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank to other food banks across Pennsylvania.** This equates to 11 million meals for those who need it most.

"We are so grateful for partners like FedEx who have helped us



JASON LUTZ (LEFT) AND ALEX BRYAN WERE JUST TWO OF THE FEDEX EMPLOYEES WHO HELPED THE FOOD BANK DELIVER EXTRA FOOD DURING THE PANDEMIC.

meet the needs of our community in this challenging time," said Joe Arthur, executive director of the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank. **"FedEx drivers have delivered more than 100 tractor-trailer loads of food for us since mid-March.** This support enabled us to deliver hundreds of thousands of pounds of additional healthy and nutritious food for those in need. We truly appreciate their help."

Derick Fritchey, director of operations at the Food Bank added, "FedEx donated at least two drivers and their tractor trailers to us each day for almost two months. They moved well over 100 tractor trailer loads of product for us all across the state. This figure does not include the countless loads of product they moved between our Healthy Food Hub and our Central Packing Operations facility. **They were instrumental in allowing us to ramp up our efforts and we absolutely could not have met the need in the first two months of this crisis without their help."**

Thank you!

On behalf of the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, we would like to thank the following corporations and foundations for their very generous support.

- Amcor Foundation
- Nationwide Foundation
- Nordstrom
- State Farm Insurance



OUR DRIVER MAKES A DAILY DELIVERY IN THE HARRISBURG AREA.



THROUGHOUT THE PANDEMIC, MEMBERS OF OUR STAFF FREQUENTLY HAND-DELIVERED CRISIS RESPONSE BOXES TO SENIORS THROUGHOUT OUR COMMUNITIES.

OUR RESPONSE TO COVID-19

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helping us to give hope and take steps to end hunger, but our work is far from over.

We expect the economic fallout from the pandemic to last for years. **More than 155,000 individuals in Pennsylvania are facing food insecurity for the very first time.** Demand for charitable food remains high and we still need your help. **September is Hunger Action Month,** and this year, we are asking you to continue your generous support of our mission and donate to help your neighbors have access to the nutritious, healthy food they need. You can also volunteer to help us pack the thousands of boxes of food needed to meet the growing demand.

We truly are, Better Together.