



Food For Thought



Central Pennsylvania Food Bank
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September | 2022

WORKING TOGETHER TO END HUNGER



Together, we are working to better serve our neighbors in need and provide access to everyone challenged by hunger in our communities.

Every September, we celebrate Hunger Action Month, a month set aside by Feeding America to bring awareness to the issue of hunger in our communities.

We know that as friends of the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, you are aware that thousands of your neighbors in central PA face the challenge of hunger. This year, with high inflation and rising prices, even more neighbors are working hard to provide for their families and themselves but are just not making enough to pay the bills and buy their groceries. **With your generous support, we are meeting their needs and providing millions of pounds of healthy, nutritious food each week.**

That is the critically important core work of a regional food bank like ours, but now more than ever, the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank is also committed to the work of **ending hunger** as we know it. Our Bold Goal states that we will provide access to enough nutritious food for everyone

struggling with hunger in each of the counties we serve by 2025. We recently refreshed our Strategic Plan to consider the hard work that remains in the next two years to truly make progress toward ending hunger.

One of the biggest steps we are taking places a deep emphasis on our equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) work. We know hunger disproportionately affects people of color and other historically underrepresented groups in the U.S., and that holds true in central Pennsylvania. To better serve our neighbors facing hunger, we need to be better. This takes intentional work to foster equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging throughout our mission. We have placed a priority on communities most affected by hunger. Through our new Community Hunger Mapping initiatives, we are gathering neighbor-centered data and metrics, measuring progress toward key goals over time and strengthening our community partnerships and informing our evidence-based strategies and tactics.

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JAVA WITH JOE

Dear Friends of the Food Bank,

September has always been one of our favorite months at the Food Bank as we celebrate Hunger Action Month (HAM)! The autumn harvest is in full swing, with the bounty from farms in central Pennsylvania flowing to markets near and far, and to our neighbors in need locally. Please check out our website to catch up on all the fun HAM activities happening in our community.

In this issue, you'll read that we recently completed a "refresh" of our Bold Goal 2025 strategic plan to guide our work through the year 2025. At the core, we remain dedicated to our vision that "No One Should Be Hungry," and we will continue our progress to ensure that every central Pennsylvanian has access to the healthy food they need to thrive. To help us close remaining food security gaps, we are engaged in deep "hunger mapping" work to better reach underserved communities. Early indications are that our more remote rural locales and communities of color require more emphasis in our efforts. We are also excited to continue building our "food as medicine" collaborations with local healthcare providers and funders, and we will be leaning in harder with partner organizations that are helping individuals and families achieve sustainability and food security.

We are also learning that systemic obstacles remain in our society that reinforce poverty and food insecurity. To better serve our neighbors facing hunger, we have embarked on a journey to foster equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging throughout our mission. And we look forward to sharing more with you as our EDIB journey continues. In the meantime, thank you for your efforts and generous support that make this mission possible!

HUNGER ISN'T SELECTIVE: MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS

William and Lorie are both single parents who have been visiting their local food pantries to help them feed their children as prices rise and inflation impacts household budgets.

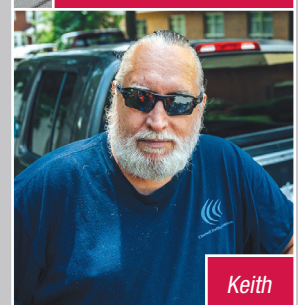
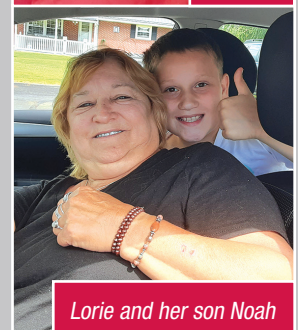
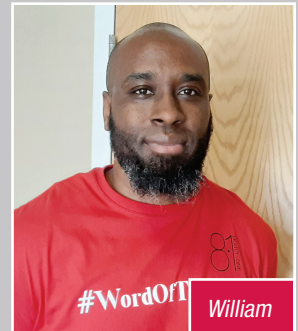
Through visits to the local food pantry, William has learned how to stretch food to the max for his family. He believes it is helpful to use what you can and learn how to cook different things with all the food provided by the pantry. It is a skill he says he learned from his grandmother.

William is currently raising five children and recently received his counselor's license. He's trying to make an income, but with rising prices, still needs the help of the food pantry to feed his family. He appreciates everything he receives. "It helps ... it saves stress."

For mothers like Lorie, who is disabled and can't work, summer can be extra hard with her son out of school and having to provide him with the meals he was no longer getting from the school. She turned to her local food pantry to help provide for the 11-year-old. She is very appreciative of all the help she receives.

Keith has been visiting his local food pantry "off and on when I needed a helping hand." He recently had to take an early retirement because of health problems. With a fixed income, paying his bills and buying groceries became difficult. Keith is grateful that his local pantry is always there when he needs it, and thanks them for taking the stress of affording healthy food off his plate.

Keith said, "I'd like to personally thank everyone at the Food Bank for all the help they have given me multiple times over the last 15-20 years. They have just made my life easier. In times that could have been super stressful, it was great to know someone was there."





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Through hunger mapping, we will be able to quantify, identify and close food distribution gaps at the sub-county level and increase our understanding of issues causing food insecurity and how to address them. This will help us engage local stakeholders and neighbors to develop localized recommendations and promote policy and programmatic changes that emerge in the research to better address food insecurity.

In addition, our Health Innovations team is working to expand healthcare SNAP referrals and integrate health education into our partner agencies. Our Senior Programs have teamed with DoorDash and local Meals on Wheels organizations to deliver food right to the doors of our seniors in need, so they don't have to leave their homes or worry about transportation to a distribution. We are working with our partners to make sure they are offering the foods requested and wanted by those they serve — cultural and ethnic foods, diabetic-friendly foods, etc.

The Central Pennsylvania Food Bank is truly committed to ending hunger in our communities this Hunger Action Month and beyond.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: FOOD BANK OF STATE COLLEGE

Under the direction of Allayn Beck, the Food Bank of State College recently made a major move to a larger facility to better serve neighbors in need in Centre County and accommodate a larger variety of food.

Allayn, who serves as the executive director, hopes that by increasing the food offerings, they will cater to the different cultural needs and dietary restrictions of the people they serve, which includes a diverse population of Hispanic, Russian, and Asian communities. This ties in with the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank's goal of providing our neighbors with the food resources they need to be healthy, well and productive. We believe **there is dignity in having access to food that tastes good, respects culture AND is good for you.**

Over the past few years, the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank helped sponsor a walk-in refrigerator and freezer at the Food Bank of State College to increase their capacity for fresh, healthy foods.

The expansion of their facility will also give the Food Bank of State College the ability to share food with other local pantries that may need it.

"I think having a bigger facility is just going to help enhance all of that re-donation and sharing of what we have with everybody else because we'll be able to keep a better inventory," says Allayn.



Allayn Beck (center) and volunteers at the Food Bank of State College, a partner of the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank.

Allayn is quick to point out that this move would not have been possible without the help of the community.

"The community is the reason we're able to do this," says Allayn, smiling. She is very thankful for the help she receives, from both her community and her volunteers.

She also knows those her food bank serves are grateful for the help. She understands the impact they are making on not only those that visit often, but the first-time visitors as well, who may be apprehensive about visiting a food pantry. "They don't often know what to expect," Allayn says. "But then they leave with a grocery cart full of food and they're so thankful and just blown away by what they've received. It reminds me what we are doing is right. We need to keep going."



Moira, a volunteer with a local partner agency.

VOLUNTEERING: AN IMPORTANT WAY TO TAKE ACTION



During Hunger Action Month in September, one important way you can take action is by becoming a volunteer for the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank or one of its partner agencies. As a veteran volunteer with the York County Food Bank (YCFB), Moira has seen a lot. The retired newspaper assistant got into the work ten years ago when she donated some fresh produce from her garden and asked about volunteer opportunities on a whim. She started serving weekly and, as time went on, picked up more responsibility, volunteering up to 15 hours a week pre-COVID. While this might seem extraordinary to some, Moira simply sees it as loving her community.

“You are helping people in a way that is important in their lives. There are people who depend largely on the Food Bank and other food distribution opportunities for the bulk of their food. By helping them with groceries, you are freeing up money for them to put gas in the car, pay a bill — that kind of thing,” Moira said.

During the height of the pandemic, Moira’s main responsibility was running the YCFB’s walk-up distribution site. Aside from making sure people get nourishing food, Moira is also careful to preserve their sense of dignity by maintaining an easygoing, positive environment. She hopes her fellow volunteers understand this great responsibility, as well as the beauty in lending a helping hand.

“If you volunteer at the opera or something like that, that’s a worthy thing,” she says. “But you are not holding the body and soul together. That’s why I think this kind of volunteering is so satisfying.

If you are interested in volunteering at the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank or one of our partner agencies, please visit www.centralpafoodbank.org.

