



FOODBANKFOCUS

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MEMBER OF
**FEEDING
AMERICA**

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akroncantonfoodbank.org

SERVING 8 COUNTIES

Carroll, Holmes, Medina, Portage, Stark,
Summit, Tuscarawas & Wayne Counties

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I enjoy finding
friendship over
a hot meal.

—DIANE



EVERY MEAL HAS A STORY. MEET DIANE

Diane, 68, loves to be around people. Her warm personality and friendly nature radiate during conversation, even with a mask on. But surviving the pandemic, trying to stay safe and social distancing have been hard for her, as it means card games, group crochet and socialization have been put on hold.

“Being alone is hard and causes depression and anxiety.”

Diane found friendships at her local hot meal program, Center of Hope. But it's more than a meal for her, as it is for so many seniors in our community. Before COVID-19, she used to visit the program every day. And though the free meal was important, it was the fellowship and community that fed her soul.

Now the program offers meals drive-thru style to limit personal contact, as well as nonperishables, fresh produce and bakery items from the pantry. Because of the food Diane receives here, she's able to ensure her bills are paid each month. Living on social security and a modest pension help her get by, but she admits she lives paycheck to paycheck. If it weren't for Center of Hope, she knows things would be much more difficult for her.

For now, Diane will keep her distance as volunteers bring food out to her car, but she's looking forward to seeing her friends again, in what has become her second home.

READ MORE STORIES OF HOPE ONLINE.
akroncantonfoodbank.org/stories

HONOR ROLL

THANK YOU TO OUR TOP SUPPORTERS OF THE SEASON

Bober, Markey, Fedorovich & Company
Kenneth & Karen Brott
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The J.M. Smucker Co.
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Synthomer Foundation
Taylor Tele-Communications, Inc.
The Timken Company
The TJX Companies
UPS Foundation
David & Cheryl Venarge
Verizon Foundation
Walmart & Walmart Foundation
Walsh Jesuit High School
The Welty Family Foundation

HARVEST FOR HUNGER CELEBRATES 30 YEARS!

The Harvest for Hunger Campaign has reached a milestone, celebrating 30 years of fighting hunger across 21 counties in Northeast Ohio. This fundraising and awareness campaign, in partnership with three other regional food banks, has impacted millions of community members over the years.

Please help our Foodbank continue to provide millions of meals for neighbors struggling with hunger by joining this year's efforts. Your support will help sustain food distribution all year long. For more information, please visit akroncantonfoodbank.org/harvest.



JOIN US!

Harvest for Hunger Campaign VIRTUAL Kickoff

FEBRUARY 16, 2021
9:00AM

Learn more at
akroncantonfoodbank.org/harvest



CHECK OUT HUNGER

Scan a \$10, \$5 or \$1 donation coupon each time you visit a participating supermarket.



START AN ONLINE FUNDRAISER

Create a personalized online fundraiser and share with your social networks.



HOST A FOOD AND FUNDS DRIVE

Collect food and financial donations.



FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Please consider making a personal donation or a corporate gift.

DOES YOUR COMPANY MATCH DONATIONS?

Many companies offer matching gift programs encouraging employees to contribute to charitable organizations. Most of these programs match contributions dollar for dollar, and some will even double or triple the amount of your gift!

Please check with your company to see if it offers a matching gift program that will match your gift to your Foodbank.

Simply obtain a form from your employer, complete your portion of the form and send it in with your donation! In our community, did you know, The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co., FirstEnergy Corp, Dominion Energy, Home Depot, Lubrizol Corp, Nestle, Starbucks Coffee Co., Progressive Insurance and the Timken Company all match gifts? **DOUBLE YOUR DONATION WITH MATCHING GIFTS!**

A NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND CEO

To say the least, 2020 was a challenging year.

It may have been the worst of times on many levels, but I believe it has also been the best of times in terms of the heroic response exemplified by our hunger-relief partners, donors and the community that supports us.

From the beginning of the pandemic, we determined there would be no closing of the Foodbank. It was our firm intention to lean into our response efforts and to demonstrate to the community that their faith in us was not without merit, and that in our time of challenge, we would not fail. We increased the frequency of the grocery distributions held at our warehouse, serving as many as 1,800 households in two hours. And though a significant increase in demand caused a 10-year inventory low, individuals, corporations, foundations and government agencies rallied together helping us purchase more food than ever in the organization's history.

As COVID-19 began shutting businesses down, we made the difficult decision to temporarily close our doors to volunteers as a safety precaution. Thankfully, help arrived from the Ohio National Guard. These soldiers came ready to work, packing emergency food boxes, serving with our hunger-relief partners, delivering food orders to programs — becoming integral members of our response efforts. These young people became Foodbankers, and we will be forever grateful to have had the honor of witnessing and sharing in their service.

The Foodbank's COVID-19 response is far from over. We know it will take months, if not years, for our region's economy and for local families to recover. Thank you for the incredible support. So many of you have offered to answer the call to provide food to people in need across the region. We are judiciously drawing upon these resources to meet the current need and to plan for the marathon ahead. Your continued support allows us to be nimble and evolve regardless of what challenges come next. We send our respect and deepest gratitude to all of you for the opportunity to partner together to feed our struggling neighbors during this crisis and beyond.

Daniel R. Flowers

Daniel R. Flowers, *President & CEO*



JOIN THE SUSTAINER CIRCLE— MAKE A LASTING IMPACT

A special group of faithful Foodbank friends have committed to fighting hunger year-round by joining the Sustainer Circle.

This monthly giving program allows dedicated community members to easily help families struggling with hunger, while making an even greater impact in the lives of kids, families and seniors in our community all year long.

To join the Sustainer Circle, please call 330.572.3102 or visit akroncantonfoodbank.org/monthlygiving.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- Receive less mail; simply tell us how often you want to give.
- Less mail = reduced costs for your Foodbank for printing and postage.
- Printing less = environmentally friendly
- Better budgeting means we'll both be able to plan for our future.

BLESSINGS IN A BACKPACK BRINGS SMILES TO CHILDREN IN NEW PHILADELPHIA

ACCORDING TO DATA FROM FEEDING AMERICA, IT'S PROJECTED THAT CHILD FOOD INSECURITY HAS INCREASED BY 43 PERCENT ACROSS THE FOODBANK'S NETWORK BECAUSE OF COVID-19.



Kelly and Traci, community volunteers, organize the packing of the children's food bags.

Four years ago at a PTO meeting, Kelly learned that children were saving juice and granola bars from the cafeteria to take home because they were hungry.

"I knew people were hungry, but I didn't know it was to this extent. And I didn't realize how many kids are at home alone, cooking and fending for themselves," she said.

Determined to help the children of her community, Kelly started a Blessings in a Backpack program to serve schools in New Philadelphia. Blessings in a Backpack is a national nonprofit that encourages communities to start their own backpack program.

The program has been serving families in New Philadelphia for the past four years. It began with 60 kids receiving easy-to-prepare meals and snacks, bridging the gap from the school's lunch on Friday to the school's breakfast on Monday. Now the program offers help to 850 children each month.

As more families are struggling because of COVID-19, the visibility of local hunger has been brought to the forefront. Kelly and her team hope the awareness helps destigmatize taking home a food bag — as students leave elementary school, they choose to exit the program though their family may still need help.

Kelly, program volunteers and school counselors regularly hear heartbreaking stories of children and families who rely heavily on Blessings in a Backpack. She reflects on the mother who called the school crying because her child missed the bus and had no way to get to school. This meant he wouldn't receive his food bag, and the family so desperately needed it. Children are also worried about Friday holidays, hoping they receive their food bag on Thursdays instead, which they do.

"Kids line up to receive their food bag and are so excited. For a kid to have to worry about that — it makes me cry. Out of 850 kids, if one child knows someone cares about them — if they don't have that in their life — then we're successful."

The partnership between Blessings in a Backpack and the Foodbank has been vital to the children's food program. "It means we can offer so many more items and different kinds of food to our students. Peanut butter to a kid — that's amazing! We were called to do this work. We ran with it and we never looked back. The Foodbank has helped our program tenfold, and we're so thankful."



Kids helping kids! New Philadelphia fifth graders help pack food bags for kids in need of a little extra help.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 16, 2021

Harvest for Hunger Campaign
VIRTUAL Kickoff

FEBRUARY 21 – APRIL 4, 2021

Harvest for Hunger: Check Out Hunger

FEBRUARY 26, 2021

CORE Lunch & Learn for Young Professionals

MARCH 18, 2021

CORE Volunteer & Networking Opportunity

FOR EVENT DETAILS, VISIT

akroncantonfoodbank.org/events

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