

FOODBANKFOCUS

A PUBLICATION OF THE AKRON-CANTON REGIONAL FOODBANK
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akroncantonfoodbank.org

MAIN CAMPUS

350 Opportunity Pkwy
Akron, OH 44307

STARK COUNTY CAMPUS

1365 Cherry Ave. NE
Canton, OH 44714

SERVING 8 COUNTIES

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



Every meal has a story. Meet Karrie.

“
We'll always choose to
feed the kids, but you
gotta have the lights on
too. We appreciate all the
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a difference.”



As she waits in line at her local pantry, Karrie tries her best to wrangle her two sons, Logan, 5, and Tim, 4. Like most boys their age, their energy is endless and shows itself through running, wrestling and finding mischief. Today is no different.

Karrie is a stay-at-home mom; daycare can be expensive. And though her husband works, it's simply not enough to provide for Logan, Tim, and Karrie's two older children whose father passed away. The death benefits they receive pushes the family of six over the income threshold to receive SNAP benefits.

“We make too much money to receive help and it just doesn't make sense, especially with the cost of food increasing,” she said. “But places like this really help. It helps cut down costs for our budget; the less we have to spend on food means we can cover other bills.”

Karrie reflects on the difficult decisions she and her husband have been forced to make at times. “We'll always choose to feed the kids, but you gotta have the lights on too. We appreciate all the help – it really does make a difference.”

Thankfully more than 600 food programs within the Foodbank's network are available to Karrie and other community members facing hunger. The Foodbank's hunger-relief network spans eight counties and serves as the difference between hunger and hope for thousands of children, seniors and families all across the region.

Thank you for supporting your Foodbank, our network of food programs and the families facing hard times. We couldn't do this work without you!

Akron Dream Center helps community find fellowship

Typically, hunger-relief programs are created by a group of individuals or an organization that realizes the need for food within a community. But sometimes a program is formed by an individual who is deeply passionate about helping people and who has lived through difficult times themselves.

Meet Rusty Nottingham. He's the founder and president of the Akron Dream Center, an organization that strives to provide the necessities for families, such as food, while also providing resources and assistance through a variety of outreach initiatives and programs.

"There was a season of my life where I was tough to love and in a rough spot — so I've always had a heart for people that are walking through that season of life, too," said Rusty.

After years in ministry work, Rusty decided to follow his heart and dedicate his time and energy to serving families living in the Wilbeth Arlington Homes development, a complex of subsidized homes. After talking with residents, he learned that many people remain indoors due to violence and drug activity.



Rusty is grateful to serve his community.

"One way to fight against that is to give people the opportunity to come together over a meal — that flushes out some of the negativity and toxicity and acts as an equalizer — we all have to eat," he said.

Offering a hot meal to residents allowed Rusty and his volunteers to come into an area where they didn't know anyone and greet them with love and acceptance.

"It's in our DNA to love people right where they're at, and that includes people who are hard to love, hard to reach

and rough around the edges. Everyone has a story, and a lot of times, a tough exterior means there are symptoms of a deeper problem."

Meeting people where they're at is exactly what Akron Dream Center does through its flagship Community Block Party. Rain, snow or shine, a hot meal is made and served outdoors in the courtyard of the housing development. The Community Block Party acts as a catalyst for building a healthy community, providing an opportunity for individuals and families to come together, share a meal, and grow in relationship with one another.



Volunteers assemble food boxes for children who receive food through the backpack program.

In addition to the hot meal, Akron Dream Center partners with alternative schools in Akron to provide bags of food to 320 students each week. Offering foods that are easy-to-open and easy-to-prepare are essential for younger children who may prepare their own meals on weekends.

As Rusty continues to grow the Akron Dream Center's programming, he hopes to replicate the Community Block Party model to serve even more families facing hunger, while also expanding the backpack program. Because of his partnership with the Foodbank, these goals are achievable.

“

Our Foodbank is incredible. It helps us to sustain and grow, knowing that we have a supply of food that we can depend on.”

Rusty Nottingham, founder and president
of the Akron Dream Center

Foodbank celebrates Volunteer Appreciation Month

The Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank thrives because of the support and dedication of its steadfast volunteers. We couldn't do this work without them! In celebration of Volunteer Appreciation Month, the Foodbank recognized some of its very special friends with the following awards.

ORGANIZATION VOLUNTEER GROUP OF THE YEAR: *Rotary Club of Stow-Munroe Falls*



The Rotary Club of Stow-Munroe Falls has been committed to serving with the Foodbank since 2013. They send volunteers to the Foodbank on a monthly basis. In 2021, they provided 31 volunteers to the Foodbank, giving more than 135 hours of service.

The Rotary Club focuses their volunteer energy on partnering with organizations that meet the community's basic needs. "You never know what a family is going through, and hunger is universal," said Mary Dula, the Rotarian in charge of organizing service opportunities. Her members enjoy knowing that they're making a direct impact in the lives of their fellow community members. **"Receiving the Organization Volunteer Group of the Year award shows our entire group how appreciated they are. They were ecstatic to receive this honor,"** said Mary.

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR: *Barbara Justen*

Barb Justen was an obvious choice for the Volunteer of the Year. She serves many departments within the Foodbank and volunteered 132 times, clocking nearly 450 hours of service in 2021. But that's not why she was selected for this special award. Barb is being recognized because she serves with her whole heart.

"What I've learned in my lifetime and experiences is to give what you can, when you can and as much as you can," said Barb. **"This is something I can do for people in need. And though I've never experienced hunger myself, as a teacher I've seen many children who have. To help others – it's simply the right thing to do."**

As a VIV, a very important volunteer, Barb can feel as if she's a staff person sometimes — she's relied on by so many. But the relationships she's formed at the Foodbank are what mean the most to her. "The greatest thing about coming to this food bank is the interactions you have with others — the bonds you form make you feel like a family. We're all here for the same purpose and it's pretty amazing."



CORPORATE VOLUNTEER GROUP OF THE YEAR: *Huntington National Bank*



Huntington Bank has a longstanding partnership with the Foodbank. Food security is an important commitment for Huntington and aligns with one of their pillars of community support.

"Our purpose is to look out for all people. If we can help one child, one family — we are making a difference in a meaningful way," said Nick Browning, regional president of the Akron region.

"We are very honored by and appreciative of being recognized as the Corporate Volunteer Group of the Year," said William Shivers, regional president of the Canton and Mahoning Valley regions. "While this is an incredible gesture, I can tell you our colleagues do not volunteer to be recognized. They volunteer because service is in their hearts and it's the right thing to do. In a world that is changing right before our eyes, the one consistent reality is that hunger is among us, now more than ever. People do not choose to be in need — but we can choose to help."

Food pantry in new campus serves the community

An exciting and unique aspect to the Foodbank's Stark County Campus is the onsite food pantry, serving individuals and families in a neighborhood that is now considered a food desert, meaning it has limited access to affordable and nutritious food. The new pantry is also a space to test new innovations that can be shared and scaled within our hunger-relief network, furthering the impact of our collective work.



Denise packs a family's order.

The Keith D. Monda Family Food Pantry & Resource Center has already served nearly 12,000 people in its first 6 months, distributing more than 105,000 pounds of food to the local community. The pantry is open Tuesdays and Wednesdays and typically serves nearly 200 families each week.

Community members in need have regular access to fresh fruits and vegetables, shelf-stable pantry items, meat, bread and dairy products.

"We were anticipating serving 100 families weekly, but it's definitely grown as we continue to expand our reach and meet the community members visiting us," said Cody Stanley, the Foodbank's manager of direct service programs.



We're happy to serve as a community resource and hope to further our relationships with local families, volunteers and other nonprofits offering support services."

The Foodbank is proud to serve neighbors in need as a choice pantry. Embracing our value of innovation, the Foodbank utilizes Feeding America's OrderAhead system. Individuals can virtually shop the pantry shelves from the

comfort of their own home or at a kiosk within the pantry. Then all food items are picked and packed by Foodbank volunteers. If the order was placed outside the pantry, the individual can schedule an order pickup time, similar to scheduling a grocery pickup at a supermarket.

"Offering an e-ordering platform for people to choose the food items they'd like is incredibly important to us. To give people the choice to choose their own groceries offers them dignity during a difficult time in their lives. Hopefully, this program will reduce the stigma associated with accessing a food pantry," said Cody.



A volunteer stocks the shelves.

Within the pantry is the Aultman Health Foundation Resource Room, a space in which community members can connect with resources beyond food, including legal aid, job readiness, health screenings and more. To learn more, please visit akroncantonfoodbank.org/starkcampus.

Foodbank staff and volunteers continue to learn, evolve and share best practices learned through operation of the pantry. Through this deeper connection point with our neighbors, the future is bright. So many community partners, donors and volunteers have shown their passion for serving our community in this new space. As more families visit the Stark County Campus to access the variety of resources available, Foodbank staff will continue to evaluate and evolve the services offered by the pantry and resource room.



Volunteers pack orders for families.

40 YEAR

ANNIVERSARY

Celebrating 40 years!

The Foodbank is excited to celebrate its 40th anniversary this year — 40 years of working with you, our valued donors, volunteers, community partners and hunger-relief partners to ensure no family in our community faces hunger. Thank you for your partnership and faith in us! We hope we've made you proud.

Volunteers Needed!

The Foodbank is searching for volunteers at both the Main Campus in Akron and the Stark County Campus. Please contact our volunteer team at 330.535.6900 or volunteer@acrfb.org.

Your Impact in 2021



1.7 million
meals processed
through volunteer
efforts



4,500
volunteers



54,000
hours of volunteer
service*

*We are grateful to the members of the Ohio National Guard who contributed 32% of these hours.

Say No to Local Hunger. Join the Harvest for Hunger Campaign!



Families shouldn't have to choose between necessary expenses and providing a nourishing meal. Senior citizens shouldn't have to choose between healthy food choices and medication. You can help by saying no to local hunger and yes to feeding local families. It's simple — consider joining the Foodbank's 31st annual Harvest for Hunger Campaign. Harvest for Hunger is your Foodbank's largest and most essential fundraising campaign, helping support food distribution all year long. This year's goal is to raise the equivalent of 4.6 million meals for our community. For more information, visit akroncantonfoodbank.org/harvest.



CHECK OUT HUNGER

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



SET UP A VIRTUAL FOOD DRIVE

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.

Mark Your Calendar

APRIL 18 - MAY 15, 2022

Walmart & Sam's Club "Fight Hunger. Spark Change." Campaign

MAY 1, 2022

Akron Area Interfaith Council's
13th Annual Hunger Walk

FOR EVENT DETAILS, VISIT

akroncantonfoodbank.org/events

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