

# FOODBANKFOCUS

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AKRON-CANTON REGIONAL  
**FOOD  
BANK**

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Akron, OH 44307

### STARK COUNTY CAMPUS

1365 Cherry Ave. NE  
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### SERVING 8 COUNTIES

Carroll, Holmes,  
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Summit, Tuscarawas &  
Wayne Counties



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**FEEDING  
AMERICA**



## Every meal has a story. Meet Penny.

Penny has a heart for helping others. She's a mother of three, a grandmother of four, and a former nurse.

Like Penny, her husband's life was dedicated to caring for others. He spent his career as a nurse tech at a local hospital. But nearly five years ago, he was diagnosed with cancer.

A few years later, Penny was diagnosed with scleroderma. Working long days — much of it on her feet — was no longer possible, so she retired. "I would still be working if I could because I love nursing," Penny reflects.

Though she can no longer work as a nurse, her supportive spirit is nourished by helping her family care for two of her grandchildren multiple days per week.

Together, she and her husband had to learn how to navigate their new

life and tighter budget. They earn too much through disability benefits to qualify for SNAP benefits. After paying rent, gas for their car and utilities, not much is left for groceries.

To help stretch their budget and feed her family, she visits her local food pantry for nourishing food.

Penny appreciates the groceries, especially meat, produce and dairy, which can often be expensive at the store. Because of the food pantry, Penny doesn't have to choose between paying for utilities or buying food.

**"We visit the food pantry because it would be rough without it," Penny says. "We really do appreciate everything we get."**



“

Sometimes people feel that fresh produce is out of reach for them financially because it may be a little more costly. It is wonderful that they can have access to new vegetables through this program.”

*Donna & Bob*

*Owners of Baker's Fresh Produce*

## Foodbank partnership helps deliver produce to local families

For kids, summertime can mean spending time outside and a break from homework. But for parents struggling to make ends meet, the break means an end to school-provided meals.

With already stretched budgets, providing those additional meals for growing kids can be difficult. To help alleviate this strain, the Foodbank's free produce delivery program is specifically for families with children.

The Foodbank partners with Let's Grow Akron, Baker's Fresh Produce and Front 9 Farm to provide farm-fresh fruits and vegetables to local families. Families receive a delivery once every two weeks throughout the summer and early fall.

The program is in partnership with Produce Perks Midwest, the hub organization for Ohio's Nutrition Incentive Programs. Through state funding, Produce Perks Midwest pays the farmers for their crops.

At Baker's Fresh Produce, Donna, the farm's owner, likes to provide a wide variety of produce so that families can try new, healthy foods they might not have the budget for.



**Donna and her husband even include recipe cards in each box to provide options on how to prepare the produce.**

As a mother of five, providing produce to families in need is very meaningful for Donna.

“I would have loved to have something like this program when we were raising our kids,” says Donna.

The produce delivery program helps parents like Pam, a single mother to a 16-year old boy. She is currently in school to become a teacher. While she waits to take her last certification test to teach middle school, she works as a substitute teacher. During the summer,

when school isn't in session, she works as a caterer to supplement her income.

“My primary employment is during the school year, so the summer can be very challenging. Grocery prices are really tough these days. When you're looking to get the most for your dollar, sometimes it's hard to justify the fresh produce.”

With the help of the produce delivery program, Pam knows she and her son will have access to nutritious food to keep their minds and bodies healthy.

“

**This program is so valuable. There's no food like fresh fruits and vegetables. Nutritionally, they're so good for you. This program enriches the families in our community.”**

*Pam*

*Food Recipient*



# Rise Academy created to strengthen hunger-relief network

With more people struggling to make ends meet, the vitality of the Foodbank's network of hunger-relief partners is crucial. Nearly 600 hunger-relief programs serve as the boots on the ground, ensuring neighbors have access to the nourishing food they need.

The Foodbank conducted a network infrastructure assessment last year and learned that nearly 70% of programs are managed entirely by volunteers, and that most do not have their next leader identified. When a food program is run by a dedicated volunteer, usually an older adult, the program may face challenges if that volunteer retires without a successor, potentially leading to a temporary halt or even permanent closure.

Enter Rise Academy: A Recipe for Our Future.

**"We explored the concept of piloting a leadership academy to help secure the future of hunger relief in our service area," said Amanda, network capacity coordinator for the Foodbank.**

After surveying the network, it was determined that partners would be interested in a program that explored succession planning, fundraising and volunteer management. The Rise Academy spanned four months and covered a variety of topics. Local experts from other nonprofits, food banks and organizations offered their expertise.

Participating partners learned valuable information from the speakers and enjoyed networking with and learning from one another.

**"I have been around the nonprofit world for more than 25 years, and I can say I learned something at each of the sessions," said Michele, the executive director of Good Samaritan Hunger Center.**

The pilot concluded this past summer. After feedback is gathered, Amanda plans to evaluate how the program can be accessible and beneficial for more partners within the network.



**Partners shared new, innovative ideas with each other.**

"I hope our partners gain the resources and connections needed to identify the goals and top priorities for their program. We believe it's beneficial to slow down in order to speed up, and we hope this program allows our partners the time and space to do that," said Amanda.



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**December 21, 2024**

Register now at [selflesself.com](https://selflesself.com)

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elf**



“

**For us, it wasn't a hard thing to do; it was the responsible thing to do. And the Foodbank is such a worthy cause. Choosing it as a beneficiary of our will is certainly a legacy to be proud of."**

*Debra  
Legacy Donor*

## Recent retirees will leave a legacy as they remember Foodbank in estate plan

There are a variety of ways to support the Foodbank, local hunger relief, and neighbors experiencing food insecurity. Financial contributions and volunteerism fuel this work, but did you also know you can create a lasting legacy by selecting the Foodbank as a beneficiary of your will, retirement assets and other estate plans?

Meet Nick and Debra, recent retirees committed to staying active and engaged in the community. Volunteering with the local parks and zoo, taking classes at the University of Akron, and even learning the piano fill their days. They also choose to spend their time with the Foodbank.

**"When I started planning for retirement, I wanted to focus on finding balance between the mind, body and soul. Giving back fulfills the soul part,"**

said Nick. "I'd argue, the person who benefits the most from volunteering here is me."

Volunteering 2-3 times per week, Nick and Debra are passionate about feeding our neighbors. In the

warehouse, at distributions or in The Venarge Family Food Pantry, this couple is willing to roll up their sleeves to support the mission.

“

**In some ways, this is a moral obligation and we're in a position to help in some small way. The needs being met by the Foodbank are foundational. It's tough to thrive if you're hungry."**

*Nick  
Legacy Donor*

After volunteering for nearly two years, the couple connected with the Foodbank as they began creating their estate plan. "I encourage people to think about the legacy they want to leave behind," said Nick. "We feel a connection here and we've had a great experience volunteering here. The process of leaving the

Foodbank in our will was easy, and I'm confident the Foodbank will be great custodians of what's left behind."

"For us, it wasn't a hard thing to do; it was the responsible thing to do. And the Foodbank is such a worthy cause. Choosing it as a beneficiary of our will is certainly a legacy to be proud of," said Debra.



**If you're interested in leaving a lasting legacy for our community by including the Foodbank in your estate plans, please contact Debra Hagarty at 330.535.6900.**

# Community finds support at S.A.L.T. BOX Ministries

Fifteen years ago, members of St. John Lutheran Church in Canal Fulton were unexpectedly gifted a building from a generous donor. They knew the additional space could be used to meet a need in their neighborhood, so they transformed it into a food program, S.A.L.T. BOX Ministries.

S.A.L.T. BOX served approximately 30 prepared meals each week the first year they were open. Now they provide 600 meals each month, serving 200 local families through their drive-thru program.



**“The need of this community has just overwhelmed me,” says Brenda, the volunteer pantry director.**

She attributes the increase in need to decreased SNAP food benefits, loss of employment and higher costs of food and living expenses.

“You see the need, and you don’t realize that sometimes we take what we have for granted. Helping people and doing things like this have really changed me. When you know you’re doing the Lord’s work, it makes a big difference.”

Brenda was instrumental in the creation of the food program. She and a few other church members formed the program’s first committee in 2009. Though she was working a full-time job at the time, she began dedicating several hours every week to support the program. She even organized fundraisers at her company to collect donations to support S.A.L.T. BOX.

Now, Brenda and a dedicated group of volunteers have stepped up to meet the increased need for emergency food, providing warm meals, bags of groceries, and comfort and prayer to families needing support.

In addition to receiving food weekly from the Foodbank, the pantry has strong relationships with local farmers who provide fresh eggs and produce and retailers who donate surplus products.

S.A.L.T. BOX serves anyone experiencing hunger. They often serve older adults, families with young children and individuals experiencing homelessness. The pantry is open two Sundays per month. When they’re not open, they provide a calendar with food distributions provided by other organizations in the area, ensuring that no one has to go without food.

**Thank you, S.A.L.T. BOX! We appreciate your partnership in the local fight against hunger!**

## Meet Jack!



Hi! I'm Jack.  
Thanks for supporting your  
Foodbank and kids like me!

Scan here to  
learn more!



Learn more about fighting childhood hunger  
at [akroncantonfoodbank.org/meet-jack](https://akroncantonfoodbank.org/meet-jack).

## Mark Your Calendar



**December 4, 2024**

**New!** Merry Meals Mixer  
Learn more at  
[merrymealsmixer.com](https://merrymealsmixer.com)

**December 21, 2024**

Selfless Elf 5k run/walk

**February 28, 2025**

Harvest for Hunger Campaign  
Kick-off Luncheon



# Honor Roll

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 Vistra  
 Christine & Michael Walker  
 Walmart & Walmart Foundation  
 Thomas & Cheryl Wells  
 Westfield  
 The Wish, Cope and Life Foundation at Stark Community Foundation  
 Woodforest National Bank  
 Harold Ziegler

# Support local families this holiday season!



Sharing a meal with your loved ones is extra special during the holidays. Gathering around a table of warm food helps warm the heart. But not everyone has the food they need to thrive. You can help provide nourishing meals for local families by supporting the Foodbank this holiday season. **Together, let's help warm the hearts of our neighbors, one nourishing meal at a time.**



### Donate Meals

Make a financial gift to provide meals for our neighbors.



### Double Dollar Day

On Cyber Monday, December 2, your gift can be matched! Make double the impact!



### Host a Virtual or Traditional Food & Funds Drive

Create an online fundraising page to share with your network and/or collect food & funds.



### IRA Rollover

Contact Debra Hagarty at 330.535.6900 to learn about beneficiary designated gifts and other deferred legacy giving options.

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