

FOODBANKFOCUS

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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 Jacqueline.

We meet Jacqueline on a cold winter morning. It is just below 10 degrees outside — the windchill makes it feel subzero — but school is still in session, so Jacqueline wrangles the rambunctious 4-year-old she regularly takes care of and heads to her local food pantry. The roads are icy, and she jokes that it'd be the perfect day to stay home, drink hot chocolate and watch a movie.

But instead of enjoying a cozy day indoors, Jacqueline picks up groceries for her family. As a single mother of five, she has many mouths to feed.

This is her second visit to the pantry. She loads her shopping cart with milk, rice, peanut butter, fruits and vegetables.

Jacqueline was laid off from her job not too long ago. She worked as a medical

transcriptionist at a local hospital for 10 years. She never needed to visit a food pantry before but without her regular income, her family's budget is strained.

"We're struggling," she says. "With the prices of food going up, it is hard."

While Jacqueline searches for a new job, she visits the food pantry to help make ends meet. Receiving groceries helps her pay for necessary expenses like electricity, the phone bill, and gas for their car so she can continue to take her young kids to school.

"Thank you," she says to the generous individuals who support local hunger relief. "You really help."



“

At the Foodbank, our vision is to feed all people. Our goal is to listen and understand how we can better serve all communities by breaking down barriers and creating welcoming spaces.”

Nathan Kreis

*Senior Manager,
Foodbank Network Partners*

Foodbank’s network offers culturally preferred foods for diverse region

Traditions, ancestry and cultural foods play an important role for many families. Ohio is home to individuals and families from all over the world, but when visiting a food pantry, it can be difficult for individuals from different cultures to find foods familiar to them.

“In addition to the types of foods people are asking for, how food is produced, picked, sacrificed and packed all matter,” said Rich Osborne, the director of food acquisition and logistics for the Foodbank.

Sourcing culturally preferred foods — nutritious foods that meet the diverse tastes and needs of individuals based on their cultural background — isn’t new work for the Foodbank. Different grains, flour, beans, vegetables, and kosher and halal food items have been requested by hunger-relief partners for years. These items aren’t frequently donated to the Foodbank, so Rich would visit specialty grocery stores to buy these items on a small scale.

But in 2023, the Ohio Association of Foodbanks administered funding on a much larger scale

for food banks to source even more culturally preferred foods.

It may be challenging to source culturally preferred foods, but the Foodbank is committed to serving its diverse region. For example, the North Hill neighborhood of Akron is home to a large refugee population; it’s estimated that 30 different languages are spoken there. Fifteen hunger-relief programs serve this community, and they attempt to provide families with foods familiar to them.



With the new funding, the Foodbank is working with the 15 hunger-relief partners in Summit County, the local health systems and Canton Fresh Market, a Stark County partner that serves a large Latin population,

to source desirable food items for these diverse populations.

A pantry employee at Canton Fresh Market speaks fluent Spanish and can act as a translator when needed — a great resource for families looking for community and support.

“

If we can offer food that looks familiar, nourishes and reminds someone of home, why wouldn’t we? It’s been cool to see people light up with a smile as they see foods they recognize.

*Pastor Mike,
Canton Fresh Market*

The Foodbank is grateful for its hunger-relief partners going the extra mile to serve all our neighbors facing hunger. Together, we can be the difference between hunger and hope.

Volunteer support is vital to the Foodbank's hunger-relief efforts

Volunteers are invaluable to the Foodbank's hunger-relief efforts. We truly could not do this work without them. They sort and inspect donated food products, build senior food boxes, pick up donations from local restaurants and retailers on our behalf, serve families in our food pantries, help at special events and with administrative tasks and so much more.

We try to celebrate our volunteers all year long, but during National Volunteer Month in April, we like to shine an additional light on their amazing efforts.



Meet Tammy. After 35 years with the department of defense, she retired in 2016, but realized she wanted to remain busy. She and her husband began volunteering with the Foodbank in 2019. They started serving on Saturdays, a fast-paced day in the warehouse sorting frozen meat products.

All volunteer activities were temporarily suspended because of COVID-19, but when doors opened back up to volunteers, Tammy and Jerry were back in full force. They quickly became reliable, regular volunteers for our drive-thru distributions. Rain, snow, sleet or sun, the couple could be found serving neighbors facing hunger in the Foodbank's parking lot every month.

"It's heartwarming to be a part of helping people. To see the smile on their face, to hear the gratefulness in their voice – that's why the Foodbank is here."

In fall 2023, Tammy began volunteering at the front desk in Akron, too. A few times per month, you can find Tammy answering phones, directing volunteer questions and serving as the friendly face in our lobby.

With the opening of the new Venarge Family Food Pantry in January, Tammy has found a new way to serve neighbors in need. It's committed and passionate volunteers like Tammy and Jerry who make this work happen.

Thank you to Tammy, Jerry and all our dedicated volunteers for choosing to feed people and fight hunger. We appreciate you!



Give Today. Help Feed Our Neighbors.

Say no to local hunger and yes to feeding local families by supporting the 33rd annual Harvest for Hunger Campaign. Harvest for Hunger supports food distribution all year long and is your Foodbank's largest fundraising campaign. Help us reach our goal of providing 4.2 million meals for our community.

To learn more, visit akroncantonfoodbank.org/harvest

✓ CHECK OUT HUNGER

Donate \$10, \$5 or \$1 each time you visit a participating supermarket or GetGo gas station.

✓ HOST A VIRTUAL FOOD DRIVE

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

✓ HOST A FOOD & FUNDS DRIVE

Collect food and funds for your Foodbank.

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Please consider making a personal donation or a corporate gift.

**HARVEST
FOR HUNGER**

Volunteer Impact in 2023



10,000+
volunteers



1.6M
meals provided



64,000
hours of service



“

The heart for this work comes from people who are in the church, who at one time in their lives were down and out, and they had to rely upon the food pantries to survive. They know that people will go hungry if we do not have this food pantry.”

*Pastor Mitch
Ellet Community Church*

Food pantry strives to feed more neighbors

Pastor Mitch was asked to serve at Ellet Community Church 10 years ago. When he first came to the Ellet neighborhood, he was overwhelmed by the state of hunger in the community.

“I saw the need in the community right away. I saw that people were walking to the pantry, taking the bus, doing whatever it took to get food. You could see the need for food; people were hungry,” said Pastor Mitch.

A few years ago, Ellet Community Church merged with another food program that had been serving the community since the early 1980s. Pastor Mitch and others at the church were worried that joining food pantries would be too much of an undertaking. But with much thought, prayer and an understanding that if they didn’t merge there would be dozens of local families without a source of food, they joined forces.

Over the past two years, the church has expanded its reach through different food programs to feed more neighbors. Each week, they serve 100 families with health complications and transportation

barriers through their home delivery program. The church also delivers food to seniors living at or below the poverty line through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program.

Including those served through their food pantry, Ellet Community Church provides food for nearly 300 families every week.



Linda enjoys the variety of food she receives from the pantry.

Because of the increased neighbors served through their program, the

church recently switched from picking up food from the Foodbank once per week to twice per week. As they’ve continued to find new ways to feed their neighbors, they’ve outgrown their current food storage area in the church’s fellowship hall and are building a new storage facility.

Their work is made possible by their family of volunteers, many of whom have experienced food insecurity themselves.

“The heart for this work comes from people who are in the church, who at one time in their lives were down and out, and they had to rely upon the food pantries to survive. They know that people will go hungry if we do not have this food pantry.”

Thanks to community support and its partnership with the Foodbank, Ellet Community Church continues to feed its neighbors in need.

“Without the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank, I just don’t think this work would be possible.”

Your support helps Foodbank reach capital campaign goal!

The Foodbank is proud and grateful to report the completion of its capital campaign, Growing for Good: The Campaign to Reach Further and Feed More. Raising \$17.5 million, the campaign enabled the Foodbank to complete mission-critical renovations at the Main Campus in Akron and fund the construction of the Stark County Campus in Canton.

Community leaders, donors, hunger-relief partners and volunteers celebrated the campaign's culmination with a ribbon cutting ceremony of the expanded Main Campus in Akron.

The campaign allowed the Foodbank to increase its food storage capacity, create new distribution points, serve its hunger-relief partners better by reducing drive time for partners in the southern region, and optimize operational logistics by creating a two-campus infrastructure.

In addition to enhancing logistics and increasing storage capacity, and therefore distributing more food to people in need, the campaign also included the addition of onsite food pantries at both campuses. The Keith D. Monda Family Food Pantry and The Venarge Family Food Pantry are open to serve families multiple days per week and include resource rooms in which a variety of community partners offer their services at no cost, including Community Legal Aid, Job and Family Services, Vantage Aging and more.

The demand for emergency food in our community has been on the rise the last several years, and the Foodbank and our network of hunger-relief partners have stepped up to serve our neighbors through the most challenging of times.



From top to bottom

1. Community leaders joined Foodbankers to cut the ribbon, unveiling the renovated campus in February.
2. Foodbank CEO Dan Flowers and City of Akron Mayor Malik officially recognized February 1 as Growing for Good Day.
3. The Venarge family toured the food pantry with their granddaughters. The Venarge's generosity helped fund the new pantry.

Thanks to your unwavering support, the success of Growing for Good has poised the Foodbank to better serve our community than ever before. We thank you for your trust in us and for your partnership.

Mark Your Calendar

APRIL 1-29, 2024

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

MAY 5, 2024

AAIC Hunger Walks in Canton and Akron

MAY 11, 2024

Stamp Out Hunger

MAY 31, 2024

Harvest for Hunger Campaign Celebration

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