

FOODBANKFOCUS

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AKRON-CANTON REGIONAL
**FOOD
BANK**

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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 Patrick.

Patrick tries hard to make ends meet. Recently, he visited four different grocery stores while shopping, hoping to find the best deals and stretch his budget as much as possible.

But Patrick hasn't always had to navigate life on a fixed income. He worked as a contractor for most of his adult life. His day-to-day often included painting homes and installing windows. But after having three massive heart attacks nearly five years ago, strenuous physical labor is no longer possible. Another heart attack could be fatal, so Patrick receives disability benefits.

Being a savvy shopper benefits his budget, but a dollar can only stretch so far with increased food and living costs.

"I'm really good about stretching my income," says Patrick. "But by the time I have gotten some of the necessities that I need, and by the time we get to the checkout, I've probably spent more than half my

money. And I only have enough to prepare six or seven complete meals."

For the first time since his 20s, Patrick visits a pantry for help with groceries.

"In years past, I had thought about coming down here. But there was never such a need that I felt like I had to," says Patrick.

Patrick shops the pantry shelves, just like he would at a grocery store. He fills his cart with pantry staples and fresh produce. Being mindful of his health concerns, he's learned the importance of eating fresh, nutritious foods that can be costly.

"Thank you for donating," Patrick says to supporters of the Foodbank and local hunger relief. "It helps more than you know."

Your support makes food available for Patrick and countless other neighbors.

Mark Your Calendar

September 18, 2024

Stark County Medical Society
23rd Annual Golf Outing

December 21, 2024

12th annual Selfless Elf 5k

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Your generosity supports local families and The Venarge Family Food Pantry

Earlier this year, the Foodbank opened The Venarge Family Food Pantry & Resource Center in its Main Campus in Akron. The pantry has replaced the monthly drive-thru distribution and is open three days per week, providing frequent access to a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, pantry staples, bread and dairy products. The choice pantry model allows neighbors to shop the pantry shelves as if they were at a supermarket, choosing items appropriate for them.

The pantry also includes a resource room with outside community partners offering services beyond food, including career development, counseling for families, support for older adults and more.

JANUARY-APRIL IMPACT



1,200

PEOPLE SERVED WEEKLY

42,694 people SERVED IN TOTAL

168,107 pounds of produce DISTRIBUTED



365,090

meals provided

“

This pantry helps me have groceries through the end of the month (when my SNAP benefits run out). It really helps me a lot. Please keep giving. You're doing a good thing.”

Michael
Food Recipient





“

I encourage everyone to make generosity a part of their financial plan during their lifetime. Start small and give what you can, whether it's time or money.”

*Kristen Manes
Foodbank Donor & Volunteer*

Local donor turns heartache into healing

Some Foodbank volunteers are so hands-on and ingrained in the organization's work that you may think they're staff members! Meet Kristen. She was a Saturday volunteer for a few years before her relationship with the organization significantly evolved.

After losing her husband Scott of 17 years at age 42, Kristen was at a crossroads. She was thankful for the time she had spent loving her best friend but unclear on how to move forward.

“There were two major events in a short timeframe that served as a catalyst for me figuring out what I was going to do with my life,” she said.

After Scott died in fall 2019 and then COVID-19 upended the world in 2020, Kristen retired at age 44. “It was a time of tremendous grief, but also tremendous gratitude for the life I had with him. Going forward, I could do whatever my heart desired.”

Her heart led her to further her involvement with the Foodbank. The pandemic sent thousands of people

to food banks, many for the very first time. Seeing the long lines of families waiting for groceries at distributions, Kristen decided she could do more than volunteer. She had the financial capacity to support the Foodbank in new ways. She became a member of the Sustainer Circle, making monthly contributions, and supported the organization's capital campaign.

During the COVID quarantine, Kristen did a lot of reading, and came upon a Buddhist principle that resonated with her: If you can alleviate someone's suffering, then do it. “So now I look for opportunities where I can help alleviate or ease the suffering of others — that's where I choose to spend my time and money.”

Living this principle to the fullest, in addition to financial support, Kristen spent 2.5 years driving a Foodbank vehicle weekly to pick up donated food items and deliver them directly to meal sites. She has since transitioned to a home delivery driver, delivering groceries to people's homes twice per month, in addition to volunteering on Saturdays. And with the opening of the new Venarge Family Food Pantry & Resource Center she also helps restock the pantry when needed.

Through her volunteerism, Kristen has developed many meaningful friendships with other volunteers who now serve as her support system.

“

I may not meet every person who benefits from the time or financial support I give, but that's not the point. Somewhere out there someone is having a better day and that's what matters.”

We are so fortunate and grateful for all the ways in which Kristen supports the Foodbank and cares for our neighbors experiencing hunger.

If you're interested in making a donation, becoming a Sustainer Circle member, volunteering or simply connecting with your Foodbank, please visit akroncantonfoodbank.org or call 330.535.6900 to learn more.



“

One of the things we're proud of is that there's never a day our seniors have to go without a meal.”

Tonya Myers

Director of Carroll County Council on Aging

Seniors find friendship and food at senior center

Life changes as we age. Navigating a new lifestyle and budget as a senior can be challenging. Carroll County Council on Aging, a hunger-relief partner of the Foodbank, is a hub for community, friendship and nourishing meals for older adults experiencing food insecurity in Carroll County.

Monday through Friday the center is filled with seniors laughing, chatting and enjoying prepared meals together. Shouts of “Bingo!” can be heard as plates of food are finished. Meals can also be picked up for individuals who would prefer eating at home.

In addition to daily warm meals, the center provides frozen meals that seniors can take home and enjoy over the weekend. The food program works hard to ensure that seniors never have to go without food. When the center is closed for the holidays, seniors are given an extra meal to take home.

“One of the things we're proud of is that there's never a day our seniors have to go without a meal,” said Carroll County Council on Aging Director Tonya Myers.

Because the center is open five days per week, it is important to

them to provide a wide variety of nutritious meals.

Swiss steak, mashed potatoes, fresh green beans, grilled cheese, wedding soup, fish and spaghetti are some of the seniors' favorite meals. They survey their seniors to see what meals they like and what new foods they want to try.



Cooks ensure meals are tasty, nutritious and low in sodium.

“Our cooks are really good at making sure nothing's repeated throughout the month. Our menus have a wide variety of different foods,” said Tonya.

In partnership with Meals on Wheels and the Foodbank's senior food box

program, the center also delivers food directly to the homes of seniors with transportation barriers or health issues that make it difficult for them to visit food programs.

It is important for the center to form relationships with the seniors who receive food deliveries.

“Sometimes, the seniors we see on the route or at their home – we're the only face they see. So, it's really important to me that they see our smile.”

Through their prepared meal program and food deliveries, Carroll County Council on Aging serves 350-500 seniors each day. Their partnership with the Foodbank helps ensure they can feed their community.

“We love the connection with the Foodbank. We've been blessed,” said Tonya.

If you're interested in learning more about starting a food program or partnering with the Foodbank, please visit akroncantonfoodbank.org/hunger-relief-network.

Foodbank pop-up pantry partners with health district to enhance services for local families

A unique partnership between the Foodbank and a local health district popped up this spring to better serve families. The Portage County Health District (PCHD), a hub for community support services located in Ravenna, held an open house and community health fair for residents. Popping up to offer grocery items at the event was the Foodbank’s mobile pop-up pantry.



The pop-up pantry visits Northeast Ohio Medical University (NEOMED) and Kent State University monthly. Many of the families accessing groceries from those locations are Ravenna residents.

The health district provides a range of community-based programs and services, such as Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, and also hosts a United Way office. Families accessing support services from these community agencies will also be able to take home nourishing groceries the first Thursday of every month.

“By providing access to nutritious food through initiatives like the pop-up pantry, PCHD aims to address a fundamental need and contribute to the overall health and well-being of our communities,” said Sarah Meduri, director of personnel and administrative services at PCHD. “Through partnerships with organizations like the Foodbank, we can leverage resources and expertise to make a meaningful impact on food insecurity in Portage County.”

PCHD hopes to serve 200 families at the monthly pop-up distribution. Located on Main Street near residential neighborhoods, the pop-up will be visible to many passersby. The pop-up will function as a choice pantry, meaning residents will shop for items as if they were at a supermarket, choosing their own food items.

“Neighbors can choose their own groceries, ensuring they receive items they’re familiar with and enjoy. This offers dignity and respect during a difficult time, and helps eliminate waste,” said Claudia, Foodbank director of network partners and programs. “We’re excited for this strategic partnership with PCHD and look forward to deepening our relationship with Portage County.”

POP-UP VISITS MEDINA, PORTAGE, STARK & SUMMIT COUNTIES **IN 2023**



View the 2023 Annual Report

Learn more about how we nourished our neighbors together by viewing our 2023 annual report at akroncantonfoodbank.org/resources.



Honor Roll

3M Company
Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank Staff
Tony Alexander
Amazon
Bill & Cindy Artman
ASAP Foundation
Peter & Heidi Augustin
Gary Benz
Big Lots
Ken & Gerri Blum
Family of H. Peter Burg
Cain Toyota-Scion
Canton Fraternal Order of Eagles #141
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Honor Roll reflects giving January-March 2024

Thank you, Foodbank Major Partners!

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1 million+ meals



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200,000+ meals



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80,000+ meals

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