MEALS FROM MOBILE BACKPACK PROGRAM
A “DEFINITE BLESSING” FOR FAMILIES

A minivan pulls into line at the Mobile BackPack distribution at Miller Park Elementary. Amanda and Stephen are inside with their three children. Soon after the COVID-19 pandemic began, they lost their jobs and have been struggling to find steady work since. They are in line with other families at Miller Park in Omaha to pick up nutritious meals for their children at the drive-through distribution.

Masked volunteers open the trunk and thank the family for coming. They load a week’s worth of breakfasts, lunches, fresh produce, and cold milk for each child.

“It allows that part of the budget to go elsewhere, and we get a good variety of food on the table. It really helps when trying to balance being a teacher, parent, and kitchen aid all at once. It’s a definite blessing.”

Food Bank for the Heartland swiftly launched the Mobile BackPack program on March 20, 2020, with partners in Omaha and Council Bluffs to provide meals for children in need after schools closed. Over the next 20 weeks, the program distributed 421,175 meals! It concluded August 7, 2020.
The words “thank you” seem so small given the support you have provided to children, families, seniors, and veterans in need. Feeding America estimates the number of food insecure people in Food Bank for the Heartland’s 93-county service area increased from 207,000 to 296,000 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Because of your generosity, the Food Bank was able to distribute 7,510,900 meals to those children, families, and seniors facing hunger in the Heartland between March 15-June 30, 2020. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) added 4,122,112 meals, bringing the total distributed meals to 11,633,012. On average, this is a 61% increase during the same period in 2018 and 2019.

The need for food assistance continues to be critical. The health and economic recovery from COVID-19 will be long and we will be with our community partners and those in need every step of the way.

I would be remiss if I did not share how proud I am with our staff and the way they have all adjusted in this work environment. Everyone in the organization has needed to think outside the box to find creative solutions to situations that did not exist, or looked much different, just a short time ago. They are talented, passionate, and compassionate people.

We also could not do what we do without you! Thank you for making a difference to all the children, families, seniors, and veterans in need.

Brian Barks  
President & CEO
Denise McCauley is passionate about Food Bank for the Heartland. She has been a member of our board of directors since July 2015, and she assumed the role of board chairman in July 2020.

"Hunger has many faces and circumstances," said Denise. "Our role is to ensure that no one is left wondering about their next meal so that they have the opportunity to thrive."

Denise is currently the executive vice president and chief operating officer at WoodmenLife. In this role, she has responsibility for Core Operations, Business Technology, and Strategic Initiatives.

Fighting hunger is WoodmenLife’s national focus. Denise has led WoodmenLife’s support of Food Bank for the Heartland’s Celebrity Chef, Strike Out Hunger, Giving Tuesday, and other initiatives.

“What I admire most about Denise is her passion for the Food Bank's mission and the people we serve,” said Brian Barks, president and chief executive officer at Food Bank for the Heartland. “Denise jumped right in from the minute she joined the board of directors. Her energy, skill set, and knowledge will help move our organization forward. On a personal note, she is extremely supportive of me, always asking how she can help.”

Food Bank Meets Growing Need During Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have an unprecedented impact on our communities and the ability for many people to access healthy food. Since the early days of the pandemic, Food Bank for the Heartland has moved swiftly with the help of our partners to adjust our sourcing and distribution practices and provide critical meals to the growing number of Nebraskans and Iowans in need.

COVID-19 has tested the resilience of the Food Bank and our network of pantry partners, but we remain committed to serving our neighbors during this crisis. None of our work at the Food Bank would be possible without the outpouring of generosity from our supporters. Thank you!

FOOD BANK FOR THE HEARTLAND’S ONGOING COVID-19 RESPONSE

Distributed 11,633,012 meals +61% INCREASE

Purchased $2,716,559 of food 4.75X GREATER

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40% increase in people served 364,043 INDIVIDUALS

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MCCAULEY LEADS BOARD WITH INSIGHT AND PASSION

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HONOR LOVED ONES WHILE HELPING HUNGRY FAMILIES

When you make a memorial or tribute gift to Food Bank for the Heartland, you are honoring a loved one’s memory and thoughtfully celebrating a special person or occasion while providing critical meals to our neighbors in need. Your gift may be of any size. All donations benefit Nebraska and western Iowa families struggling with food insecurity.

The person you are honoring, or another designated individual, will receive a colorful card from the Food Bank by email or postage mail notifying them of your gift in their name.

To learn more about memorial and tribute gifts, please contact Nick Long, development operations and prospect manager, at NLong@FoodBankHeartland.org.

New Campaign Engages Heartland Legal Community

Food from the Bar is a new initiative aimed at Omaha metro area’s legal community to participate in a friendly competition while providing critical meals for our food-insecure neighbors. Law firms and other legal organizations will compete October 1-16 to donate the most funds to help Food Bank for the Heartland distribute food to the growing number of individuals and families who need help. Contact Joani Mullin, community engagement officer, at jMullin@FoodBankHeartland.org, for more information about Food from the Bar.