

THE DISH

SPRING 2021



HUNGER IN THE HEARTLAND

In our 40-year history, Food Bank for the Heartland has never witnessed a hunger crisis like the current one caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Before March 2020, food insecurity was a serious issue in the 93 Nebraska and Iowa counties served by the Food Bank. Feeding America estimates that pre-pandemic, more than 204,000 individuals were experiencing food insecurity.

Now, over a year later, more of our neighbors than ever are struggling to feed themselves and their families due to record unemployment, school closures, and other barriers that have made it difficult to obtain healthy food.

Feeding America estimates more than 296,000 people are now food insecure in our area, an increase of approximately 45 percent.



From March 15, 2020 to January 31, 2021, the Food Bank distributed 32.6 million meals and spent over \$11.4 million to purchase food.

Food Bank for the Heartland anticipates the economic recovery and return to pre-COVID-19 food insecurity rates will likely take years.

Pantry Partner Doubles Distribution, Provides Support in Crisis



Co-leaders of the Clair Cares Food Pantry, Stevonna Middleton and Lynell Leeper, with Rev. Portia Cavitt

Reverend Portia Cavitt is a passionate advocate for families receiving ministry at Clair Memorial United Methodist Church in Omaha, where she proudly serves as senior pastor. The church operates the Clair

Cares Food Pantry on the third Saturday of each month to provide urgently needed meals to those in the community experiencing food insecurity. Clair Memorial United Methodist Church is one of more than 600 organizations that are part of Food Bank for the Heartland's network of partners across Nebraska and western Iowa.

“We serve a remarkable, diverse community in the northwestern part of Omaha. We see single mothers, single fathers, grandparents raising their grandchildren, those employed, underemployed, and unemployed, senior citizens, and those in our community who are homeless. The need for food is universal regardless of language and cultural barriers. We have more than doubled our distribution in 2020. Many of our recipients are thankful and appreciative of the food provided. It helps them stretch their dollars to pay bills and worry less about putting food on the table. With remote learning and working from home, the increased burden of grocery bills is astronomical. The pandemic is also affecting our mental and emotional health, and without pantries, people would be in a bad way.” *Pastor Portia Cavitt*

Letter from the President & CEO

April is National Volunteer Month, and it is a special time to recognize the crucial work our volunteers do to assist our friends and neighbors in need. In 2020, even with reduced volunteer hours available due to social distancing guidelines, more than 36,000 hours were donated by volunteers. The equivalent of 19 full-time employees, volunteers spent time assembling backpacks for school children and packing community boxes with shelf-stable products to be distributed to those facing food insecurity across our entire service area. Our volunteer center remains open, and I encourage you to sign up for a shift at FoodBankHeartland.org! We salute all volunteers, at the Food Bank and elsewhere, for making this community a better place!

Last month we celebrated the 20th anniversary of our Celebrity Chef fundraiser. We were thrilled to welcome back Chef Curtis Stone for this special event, and while we shifted to a virtual format this year, more than 700 people participated. It was a good moment to step back and celebrate the incredible support received from the community while also continuing our work of ensuring access to healthy food for those in need across Nebraska and western Iowa.

The need for assistance continues to be great and recovering from the health and economic impact of COVID-19 will take time. As a pillar of the community serving food-insecure friends and neighbors well before the pandemic, we will also be here long after it is gone. Thank you for your support. We could not do this important work without you!



Brian Barks
President & CEO



GROCERY GAMES RAISE FUNDS AND AWARENESS

Let the games begin! The Food Bank for the Heartland Friends are hosting the 3rd annual Grocery Games in late April. This virtual food drive is a friendly competition among the Foodies membership to generate funds for the Food Bank.

The Food Bank Friends, also known as the Foodies, is an organization dedicated to supporting the Food Bank through volunteerism, fundraising, and the promotion of community awareness.



For the Grocery Games, Foodies members are assigned to one of four teams, and bragging rights go to the team that generates the most funds and has the most participants. The Food Bank will use funds raised to purchase urgently needed food items for families impacted by COVID-19. Thank you to Grocery Games Chair Jayne Timmerman and all the Foodies!

If you are interested in joining the Foodies, please visit FoodBankHeartland.org for more information.



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 or thoughtfully celebrating a special person or occasion while providing urgently needed meals for families in Nebraska and western Iowa. The person you are honoring or another designated individual will receive a colorful card by email or U.S. mail notifying them of your gift in their name.

Your memorial or tribute gift may be of any size. All donations benefit children, seniors, and families across the Heartland struggling with food insecurity.

To learn more about memorial and tribute gifts, please contact Nick Long, Development Operations and Prospect Manager, at (402) 905-4836 or NLong@FoodBankHeartland.org.

Since the Pandemic Hit, Your Support Helped Provide:



32,605,649
meals



330
mobile pantries
with food



1,253,103
people with food



1,334,071
backpack meals

March 15, 2020 – January 31, 2021

VOLUNTEERS ARE THE HEART OF THE FOOD BANK

The dedication of compassionate community members is an integral part of our fight against hunger. Volunteers have a tremendous impact on operations at Food Bank for the Heartland. In 2020, 36,255 volunteer hours were donated. These hours were spent assembling community packs with nonperishable staple items for families in need, filling bags with meals for at-risk children who participate in the BackPack program, sorting donated food for repack, and helping with other mission-critical tasks.

April is National Volunteer Month, and we celebrate the efforts of our volunteers now and throughout the year. Volunteers are truly the heart of Food Bank for the Heartland. If you are interested in learning more about volunteering at the Food Bank, please visit FoodBankHeartland.org.

“Conagra encourages employees to volunteer year-round as a way to take action and make a direct impact on hunger and other issues facing our community. Volunteerism also provides the opportunity to learn, reflect and gain a deeper understanding of complex societal issues, increasing the compassion we have for so many people in our community.”

Rick Hansen, VP Human Resources at Conagra Brands

“WoodmenLife has a National Community Focus on fighting hunger. In Nebraska and western Iowa, Food Bank for the Heartland is a critical resource for so many in need. We are proud of our long-term partnership with the Food Bank and our dedicated volunteers who give their time and resources to help ensure that families throughout the area receive the healthy meals they need.”

Denise McCauley, Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer, Secretary at WoodmenLife

“I like to volunteer at the Food Bank for a couple of reasons: First, I have seen the situation of child food insecurity firsthand in other volunteer situations, and no kid deserves to go hungry. Working at the Food Bank allows me to band together with other volunteers to assemble products that can help families get back on their feet and become productive citizens. Second, I have recently lost three good friends who showed me the value of giving yourself to help the children of your community. I honor them with my service.”

Ted Killham, member of the Golden Kiwanis, weekly volunteer



A Donor Bill of Rights

Philanthropy is based on voluntary action for the common good. It is a tradition of giving and sharing that is primary to the quality of life. To assure that philanthropy merits the respect and trust of the general public, and that donors and prospective donors can have full confidence in the not-for-profit organizations and causes they are asked to support, we declare that all donors have these rights:

- To be informed of the organization's mission, of the way the organization intends to use donated resources and of its capacity to use donations effectively for their intended purposes.
- To be informed of the identity of those serving on the organization's governing board, and to expect the board to exercise prudent judgment in its stewardship responsibilities.
- To have access to the organization's most recent financial statements.
- To be assured their gifts will be used for the purposes for which they were given.
- To receive appropriate acknowledgment and recognition.
- To be assured that information about their donations is handled with respect and with confidentiality to the extent provided by law.
- To expect that all relationships with individuals representing organizations of interest to the donors will be professional in nature.
- To be informed whether those seeking donations are volunteers, employees of the organization or hired solicitors.
- To have the opportunity for their names to be deleted from mailing lists that an organization may intend to share. (Food Bank for the Heartland does not sell or trade its donors' personal information. The Food Bank will periodically use a third party to communicate only with its donors.)
- To feel free to ask questions when making a donation and to receive prompt, truthful and forthright answers.

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Virtual 20th Annual Celebrity Chef Featured Curtis Stone

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Food Bank for the Heartland's 20th annual Celebrity Chef fundraiser was different than past events, but it was still a fun-filled and impactful evening! More than 700 guests participated in the virtual festivities on March 4, 2021 and cooked alongside award-winning chef and entertainer Curtis Stone as he performed a live-streamed culinary demonstration from his kitchen in Los Angeles. Celebrity Chef was presented by Conagra Brands Foundation with media partner KETV NewsWatch 7.

Many guests purchased meal kits featuring all the ingredients for the evening's meal, including Omaha Steaks ribeyes. The recipes were also made available online. Guests were able to bid on 70 unique auction items and purchase Food Bank merchandise in the online Celebrity Chef Store.

We set a \$100,000 donation goal for the event's Feed the Need initiative for ongoing COVID relief efforts of providing emergency meals to the thousands of hungry families across 93 counties in Nebraska and western Iowa. And, thanks to the generosity of WoodmenLife and a Friend of the Food Bank, each providing \$25,000 in matching funds and of guests who donated, we surpassed the goal by raising more than \$104,000!

Thank you to sponsors, attendees, volunteers, board members, and staff for making Celebrity Chef such a success!



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