

THE DISH

SPRING 2024



“ My favorite part about volunteering is just helping others. Giving back what I once needed, giving that to somebody else.

— Q, Former Recipient Turned Volunteer



Q's son volunteering

SPREADING HOPE AFTER OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

Q Ellison spends hours each week distributing food to those in need at Catholic Charities' Saint Juan Diego Center in Omaha. Being able to help others brings her immense joy—as she knows the feeling of being on the receiving end of that food.

Three years ago, employees at her husband's place of work went on strike, leaving them without an income. "We drained what little savings we had to pay rent, utilities, and the car payment—which left us struggling to put food on the table. There were many nights I cried myself to sleep due to the hopelessness I felt every single day. The Food Bank and their partners is what gave me hope, it's what kept food on the table."

When her husband went back to work, it was Q's son who had the idea of volunteering at the pantry. "My son, who is disabled, asked if we could work at the pantry we visited. To my surprise, they welcomed us with open arms, and we've been volunteering together ever since."

For those who find themselves in similar situations, Q's story reminds us all that during times of great need, help is never too far away. "I've been there. I have felt that hopelessness...why do I have to keep going to a food pantry? We struggled to put gas in the vehicle just to make it to the pantry. I have been there.

Don't give up hope. You will make it."



Q with Featured Celebrity Gail Simmons

Q recently shared her story of hope with more than 920 attendees at our 23rd annual Celebrity Chef event and received a standing ovation from the crowd. With your support—we raised the equivalent of more than 2.1 million meals—which will help families like Q's who are facing hunger across the Heartland. THANK YOU!

OUR MISSION

To eliminate hunger in the Heartland by ensuring consistent access to healthy foods through community partnerships.

A NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO

Throughout my tenure at the Food Bank, I can't think of anyone more transformational than former President and CEO, Susan Ogborn, who passed away in January.

I was hired in April 2009 to lead our fundraising and communications team of three staff members, including me. Susan took the CEO position in June. I had ZERO fundraising experience and expected her to let me go. Instead, she believed in me, and our relationship spanned the next nine years.

Over that time, she took an under-the-radar organization, and turned it into a well-oiled machine that people believed in. She knew transforming this place was not an overnight process—but she saw an untapped capacity and potential within our team. With her vision, we developed a one-for-all mentality, which we still carry to this day.

Above everything, I admire Susan's work to establish the Food Bank as a place that offers multiple chances to succeed. We have several people who have taken that and ran with it. I'm one of them.

When I was fortunate enough to be named Susan's successor, my first thought was, "Don't mess up what she has done." I believe with all my heart that we are the organization we are today because of her, and I will work every day to build upon her vision to better serve our communities. Susan, you laid the foundation and truly deserve all the credit. We won't let you down. Rest in peace, friend.



Brian Barks and Susan Ogborn

Brian Barks
President & CEO

STEP UP TO THE PLATE & STRIKE OUT HUNGER!

Nothing says "summer in the Heartland" quite like baseball. For thousands of children, however, summer means one thing: hunger. Having kids at home during the summer places additional strain on already tight budgets and area food pantries. That's why for the past 17 years, companies have joined Food Bank's Strike Out Hunger campaign.



DONATE FOOD



RAISE FUNDS



VOLUNTEER

Your organization's participation will have a direct impact on Heartland families facing hunger this summer. You'll compete against local companies and earn points through the tactics above. Hit a home run and fight childhood hunger!

Sign up today by contacting
EBurke@FoodBankHeartland.org.



POWERED BY
WOODHOUSE



Right now, thanks to the generosity of Woodhouse Auto Family, **your gift to the Backpack Program will be matched—dollar for dollar—up to \$500,000**, providing twice as many Backpack meals!

Visit FoodBankHeartland.org/Woodhouse to make 2X the impact today!

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I volunteer to give back and help those in need. We need positive change!



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I volunteer because people should not have to suffer for basic human needs.



CELEBRATING ALL VOLUNTEERS!

April is National Volunteer Month, and we want to say THANK YOU to our dedicated volunteers, who have generously given their time and talent to help communities across Nebraska and western Iowa. Without their commitment, we could not provide this life-changing work to the 1 in 11 people—including 1 in 9 children facing hunger across the Heartland.

Among other activities, Food Bank volunteers package non-perishable items for our mobile pantries, as well as Backpack meals for children, six days a week. **In FY 23, volunteers donated more than 39,000 hours—the equivalent of nearly 20 full-time employees.** We celebrate you!



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I have experienced food insecurity myself, so it feels great to help others.



If you are interested in volunteering, please scan the QR code or visit our website today.



HONOR LOVED ONES WITH A TRIBUTE GIFT

When you make a memorial or tribute gift to the Food Bank, you are honoring a loved one's memory or thoughtfully celebrating a special person or occasion—while providing urgently needed meals. The person you are honoring (or another designated individual) will receive a colorful card by email or postage mail notifying them of your gift in their name.

With Mother's Day and Father's Day just around the corner, this is a fitting tribute opportunity. All donations benefit children, seniors, and families across the Heartland experiencing food insecurity.

To learn more about memorial and tribute gifts, visit FoodBankHeartland.org/tribute.



YOUR VOICE IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE!



Food insecurity has been a hot topic in this year's legislative session. And with your help, great progress has been made for food insecure neighbors. After thousands across Nebraska voiced their disappointment in Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen's decision not to opt into the Summer EBT Program, he changed his stance in February, **making Nebraska the 36th state to join the effort.** The program will help approximately 150,000 children access nutritious food this summer.

While we are grateful for that victory, your voice is still needed on several other bills in Nebraska and Iowa that will have a tremendous impact on the long-term health of Heartland neighbors. And we continue to advocate for the support of nutrition programs and TEFAP at the federal level, including a strong Farm Bill.

Continue the conversation! Visit FoodBankHeartland.org/Advocacy today.

VISIONARY LEADER LEAVES PROFOUND LEGACY

At the start of this year, Susan Ogborn, Food Bank for the Heartland's former President and CEO, passed away. Susan was instrumental in shaping the Food Bank's legacy, serving as our fearless leader from 2009 until her retirement in 2018.

So much of our success is credited to Susan's tenure. Her determination and passion for food security forever transformed the Food Bank's brand, operations, and strategic vision in how we fight hunger as an organization. We believe the most fitting tribute to Susan is to share her legacy through the words of those she impacted most—the Food Bank team.

"Susan was a kind-hearted person willing to help anybody with anything they needed, even if it wasn't work related. She gave me the chance to work at the Food Bank even though I was an ex-felon. That gave me an opportunity to show her that I was a better person." —James Farley, Distribution Center Specialist

"Susan and I became good friends. I enjoyed the times the ladies from the Food Bank would spend together at her home. Susan would cook and everyone would sit and enjoy fellowship. During that time, our relationship grew, and I knew I could confide in her." —Melissa Barfield, Community & Partner Support Representative

"Susan was an inspiration to so many who desire to do great things. She redefined what being a female leader means. She inspired change even when it was difficult. She led by example. She never backed down from a challenge. She never told you no, but she laid out all the hurdles and made you fight for what you believe in. She was a force to be reckoned with." —Ericka Smrcka VP, Operations

