

THE DISH

SUMMER 2024



HERE FOR THE HEARTLAND

Food Bank for the Heartland has been operating in crisis mode since the floods of 2019. And on April 26th, 2024—mother nature produced another crisis—forcing neighbors in several communities to face a stark new reality.

Together with first responders and our partners, we're providing food, support, and hope in the face of disaster.

We know—now more than ever—that each of us is just one situation away from needing food assistance. That situation could be the loss of a job, a medical emergency, or a tornado. We will continue to be "Here for the Heartland" during times of great need—offering consistent access to healthy foods through our community partnerships.

The Food Bank staff has visited several communities across our service area recently to learn more about the various barriers neighbors are facing. Julie, a resident of Atlantic, Iowa lost her job three months ago. The mother of three says the Atlantic Food Pantry has been a blessing during her darkest times. "I've had to go without meals so the kids could eat. I'd rather them go to bed with something in their stomach."

While Julie's job loss forced her to need food assistance, other Heartland neighbors can't afford the high cost of everyday essentials, despite the job they have. A Bellevue resident visiting our School-Based Mobile Pantry recently told us, "I have four kids and it's just not possible with the price of groceries. This is my first time here and it's great."



“
They don't look down on you for needing food.
They know my name and my story, and that's the
great part about living in a small community.

—Julie

We also spoke with a gentleman visiting a drive-through pantry in western Iowa who shared that he doesn't qualify for SNAP. "With the high cost of medications we need to pay for, every month we need to decide—do we want to eat, or do we want to live?"

Neighbors in every county across Nebraska and western Iowa are making unthinkable decisions every day. Through the tenacity and generosity of our communities, we can face these challenges together.

At Food Bank for the Heartland, the success of our mission depends on the generosity of people like you. As Heartland neighbors face more challenges, your continued support is critical. Visit FoodBankHeartland.org today to take the next step toward ending food insecurity in our communities.

OUR MISSION

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

A NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO



The recent storms across Nebraska and western Iowa have caused me to reflect on the word “community.” After EF3 tornadoes wreaked havoc across our service area including Douglas and Washington County in Nebraska and Pottawattamie County in Iowa, among others in April, “community” has taken on a whole new meaning.

You’ve shown us all the true definition of community—a group of people who are there for each other in all circumstances—in times of blessing and times of need. Though we’ve witnessed our share of destruction over the years, I’ve never seen a clearer definition of “community” than when I look at the outpouring of support you’ve provided in the aftermath of these storms.

As we continue to work with first responders, and state and local government, I’ve had moments of utter

despair. My heart breaks for everyone affected by the tornadoes. But with every moment of doubt and fear, I am uplifted by stories of survival, hope, perseverance, and community.

As we continue to face historic food insecurity highs (please see the maps on the next page), mother nature has added new barriers for neighbors, who are now in need of food assistance. As you continue to be here for your community, the Food Bank will continue to be “Here for the Heartland.”

No matter the circumstances you are facing, we are here for the long haul. We will continue deploying our mission until everyone has access to healthy food. That’s what community is all about. I know no one understands that better than the great people of Nebraska and western Iowa, and I am grateful for your support.

Brian Barks
President & CEO

COMMUNITY SUPPORT OF THE FOOD BANK’S MISSION



Over the last several weeks, our community has shown up to support our mission in a variety of ways. In April, the scouts from the **Mid-America Council, BSA** hosted their annual Scouting for Food drive, collecting 22,746 pounds of food for neighbors in need.

Our Foodies hosted their annual **Cocktails & Cans** event at the Food Bank and raised more than \$6,000. The event also hosted a volunteer competition, resulting in 648 bags packed for our Backpack Program.



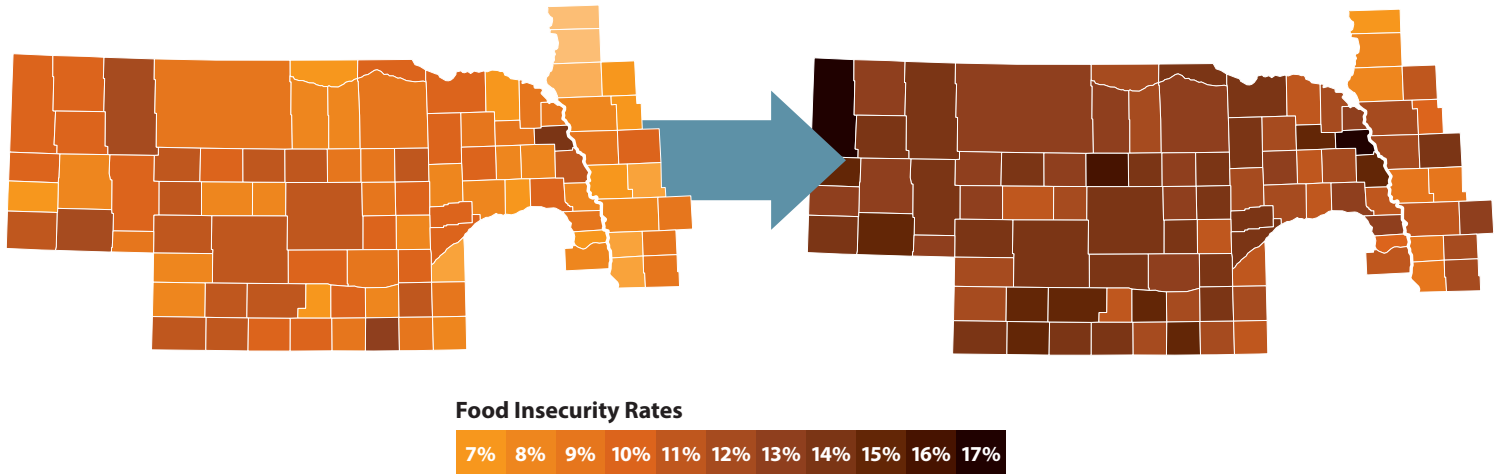
We also want to thank our friends at **Dunkin’**, who recently presented the Food Bank with a check for \$25,000 and sent several of their employees to volunteer to help alleviate childhood hunger.

Collectively, these groups raised the equivalent of 111,955 meals. This is a testament to the generosity of our community. When we work together towards the unified goal of fighting hunger, we can create sustained change. **THANK YOU!**

FOOD INSECURITY LEVELS SPIKE ACROSS THE HEARTLAND

Feeding America recently released its annual Map the Meal Gap report, which offers a nationwide comprehensive view of food insecurity rates. The 2024 study shows that hunger rates have increased across the Heartland. All counties in Nebraska and Iowa saw significant increases in food insecurity rates, compared to last year's report.

In Food Bank for the Heartland's service area, which includes 77 counties in Nebraska and 16 in western Iowa, food insecurity rates increased by more than 38 percent. That means 1 in 8 people is facing hunger, compared to 1 in 11 from last year's report. The food insecurity rate among children jumped by a staggering 56.4 percent, with 1 in 5 Heartland children now facing hunger.

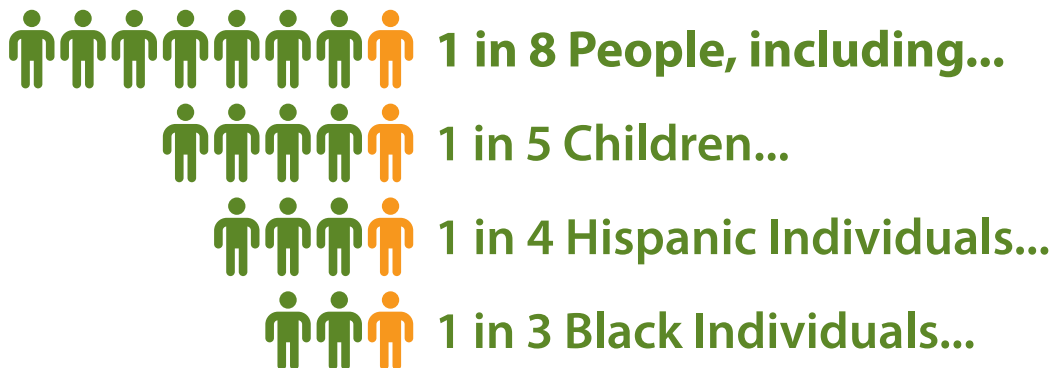


Source: (Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap 2023 and 2024, based on 2021 and 2022 data)

Prolonged inflation, with higher costs for everyday essentials like food, childcare, medicine, and utilities, has made it increasingly difficult for families to thrive. What would have been a difficult situation a year ago, may now seem impossible, particularly for our neighbors who were impacted by the recent devastating storms.

Hunger is everywhere.

While every Heartland community is facing hunger, not every individual experiences it in the same way.



...is facing hunger in the Heartland.

BECOME A MONTHLY MEAL MAKER TODAY!

Our monthly **Meal Makers** program provides stability for the 1 in 8 Heartland neighbors facing hunger. Unexpected events, such as the floods of 2019, the pandemic, inflation, and tornadoes—have put a greater need on steady donations. Your monthly gift ensures we can respond to the growing need more efficiently.



We are urgently asking for your support. Thanks to our friends, **Maria and Dean Jacobsen**—donors who sign up to be a monthly Meal Maker will have their **first three months of gifts matched**—up to a total of **\$25,000!** Plus, you can choose from a variety of payments, including our newest option of automatic bank withdrawals (ACH).

Your monthly gift will become a cornerstone of stability for Heartland families, offering them assurance that our community is here to support them when they need it most. For questions on this program, contact Jerlyn Swiatlowski at jswiatlowski@foodbankheartland.org.

FUELING OUR MISSION:

We're excited to share that our newly branded trucks are hitting the pavement. The Food Bank fleet—which now consists of ten trucks — traveled more than 300,000 miles last year, delivering nutritious food to Heartland communities in need.

To keep up with the growing demand, the Food Bank has recently moved to a 72-hour distribution model. This allows Network Partners across our 93-county service area to order and receive food more frequently (or just in time for distribution.) It also allows our team to move increased quantities of food out of our building (turns), creating more space in our warehouse to source, store and repack additional product. These changes will help the Food Bank deliver our mission more effectively and equitably across our service area.

DONOR BILL OF RIGHTS[®]

Food Bank for the Heartland is committed to keeping your personal and organizational information acquired during the donation process private. We utilize your contact information to process your gift, maintain accurate financial records, and keep you informed of Food Bank activities.

We do not sell or trade your contact information to other groups, nor will we solicit donations from you on behalf of outside parties. This policy applies to all information received by the Food Bank—both online and offline—whether communicated electronically, orally or in writing.

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