

THE DISH



SPRING 2025

“
What I receive here
helps me balance what
I’m able to provide
in my home.

— Abbie, Fremont Pantry
Recipient



Food Bank board members and staff
volunteer at Fremont Pantry

FREMONT PANTRY PROVIDES LIFELINE TO NEIGHBORS IN NEED

Fremont’s Care Corps LifeHouse Pantry—one of the Food Bank’s 514 Network Partners—serves Dodge County, Nebraska residents needing food assistance. Over the last five years, pantry officials say they’ve seen an overwhelming spike in demand. *“We are serving 6x the number of meals since 2019. We couldn’t do this without the Food Bank. There’s just no way we could feed this many people,”* says Julie Sleister, Chief Operating Officer.

Shelby, a mother who recently overcame homelessness, says the support from the pantry is critical to her family’s survival. *“I started using the pantry when I was homeless. It means a lot. It helps to know my son and I are not going to starve.”*

Shelby says the feeling of knowing she’s taken care of means the most to her. *“I feel hope when I come here because I need help and they’re giving it to me. I can just come here, and I feel relief.”*

Another neighbor, Abbie, says the pantry allows her family to live a healthy life. *“There’s much less waste when you can select the items your family needs and wants. And when you have good food choices, it’s easier to be healthy.”*

Members of the Food Bank’s Board of Directors and staff recently volunteered to support neighbors like Abbie and Shelby. For board member Eva Roberts, it was a full circle moment as she witnessed the connection between the Food Bank, its pantry partners, and neighbors in need.

“One of the wonderful things about serving on the board is how its impact is amplified by the hundreds of pantry partners who ensure the food supplied by the Food Bank ends up on tables. I am grateful for this opportunity to volunteer and meet some of the families who benefit from this network of generosity.”

It’s that continued generosity that helps the Food Bank keep shelves stocked at this pantry—and hundreds of others across our 93-county service area. Thank you for playing an integral role in the fight against hunger.

Scan the QR code or visit
FoodBankHeartland.org/Donate
to make a gift today and provide
hope to Heartland neighbors.



OUR MISSION

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

A NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO

Spring is officially here, which means the Food Bank is one step closer to having our future facility at 84th and L in Omaha completed! As we continue to face economic uncertainty and new challenges that create additional barriers to deploying our mission, this facility could not come at a better time. Construction milestones include erecting the superstructure and wall panels, and completing the roof. We hope to have our certificate of occupancy in mid-December with a potential move-in date of late January 2026.

Our team has also made phenomenal progress on our capital campaign goal. As of press time on this newsletter, we've raised \$19.8 million from 1,066 donors which is 73.3% of our \$27 million goal. Thank you to everyone who has supported us thus far! There's still time to join our campaign. Scan the QR code to join us in the Food Bank's next chapter of fighting hunger.



Brian Barks, President & CEO



Learn more about our new facility at BuildAHealthierHeartland.org



CELEBRITY CHEF

CULINARY COOK-OFF

An Evening with

TOM COLICCHIO
AND OMAHA'S TOP CHEFS

View and download event photos at FoodBankHeartland.org/chef25photos

Photo credits: Green Room Studios Photography (left & center) and Casie Schlueter Photography (right)

THANK YOU FOR MAKING CELEBRITY CHEF A SUCCESS!

1,200 of our closest friends joined us on March 6 at CHI Center for our 24th annual **Celebrity Chef fundraiser**. Not only did we break an attendance record, but we also surpassed our goal of raising 2.1 million meals. Thanks to generous support from corporations, foundations, and individuals, we raised more than 2.8 million meals for Heartland neighbors!

A huge thank you to our Celebrity Chef, Tom Colicchio, our guest judges Sarah Baker Hansen, Matthew Brown, and Coach Matt Rhule, our sous chefs from Conagra, and our local chefs, Tim Nicholson, David Utterback, and Nick Strawhecker. Congratulations to Chef Strawhecker, who won our first-ever Culinary Cook-Off!

The Food Bank is beyond grateful to everyone who supported this fundraiser and helped make it such a phenomenal success. Your support will change lives across the Heartland!

VOLUNTEERS MAKE OUR MISSION POSSIBLE!

April is National Volunteer Month! The Food Bank could not deploy its mission without the dedicated individuals, corporations, and civic groups, who provide gifts of time and talent to help nourish our communities.

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 24, volunteers donated more than 52,000 hours**—the equivalent of nearly 26 full-time employees. We celebrate your efforts, and we are thankful for every Food Bank volunteer. On behalf of our staff, and those we serve, THANK YOU!

52,497 HOURS

Learn more at FoodBankHeartland.org/Volunteer



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I feel like I am making a difference in someone's life.

“

I suffered from food insecurity as a child, so I know how important the Food Bank's impact is.



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Everyone struggles, and if I can help in any way, I will—whether it's packing items or donating what I can.



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 18 years, companies have joined Food Bank's **Strike Out Hunger** campaign.

Your organization's participation will help raise 400,000 meals for Heartland families facing hunger this summer. You'll compete against local companies and earn points through donations of time, food, and funds. Hit a home run and fight childhood hunger with the Food Bank!



Strike Out Hunger

Sign up today!

FoodBankHeartland.org/StrikeOutHunger

HELP 2X THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN FACING HUNGER

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 for the **1 in 5 children** facing hunger in our service area.

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

*Give 2X
the Backpacks*



POWERED BY
WOODHOUSE



ADVOCATING FOR HEARTLAND NEIGHBORS

Food bank programs across the country are only as strong as the support they receive. Food Bank for the Heartland's Government Relations team is monitoring legislation at state and federal levels and is working to protect and expand vital programs to ensure no one in the Heartland goes hungry.

We recently joined forces with the Iowa Food Bank Association for Hunger-Free Day on the Hill in Des Moines to promote Double Up Food Bucks and Choose Iowa, programs that would bolster access to locally grown and healthy foods, and to schedule upcoming appointments with Iowa delegates this summer.

Within the Nebraska Legislature, we are closely monitoring SNAP benefits legislation. We advocated for policies that would keep gross eligibility for SNAP at 165% of the federal poverty level and would remove the ban on those who hold a drug felony. These measures are integral to ensure that Nebraskans continue to have access to federal nutrition programs. The Nebraska Legislature has also held committee hearings on other anti-hunger related measures including a Universal School Meals program, SNAP restaurant meals, TANF, and a Grocer Investment fund.

At the federal level, Food Bank for the Heartland and Food Bank of Lincoln traveled to Washington, D.C., to advocate for our neighbors and partners—educating our federal delegation on the importance of strong and enhanced federal nutrition programs and policies.

As we further engage our community of supporters in becoming food security advocates, we've recently updated our website to enable individuals to sign up and receive timely updates on combating hunger across our communities. **To stay abreast of this evolving landscape, scan the QR code or visit FoodBankHeartland.org/advocacy to join our advocacy email list.** Please continue to visit our website for the latest advocacy updates and how they may affect Heartland neighbors in need.

JOIN OUR ADVOCACY EMAIL LIST



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 make a memorial or tribute gift, visit FoodBankHeartland.org/tribute.



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