

# THE DISH

SUMMER 2025



PARTNER  
FOOD BANK OF  
**FEEDING  
AMERICA**



COZAD HAYMAKER GRAND GENERATION CENTER, DAWSON COUNTY, NE



KEARNEY JUBILEE CENTER, BUFFALO COUNTY, NE



GRAND ISLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS, HALL COUNTY, NE



KEARNEY JUBILEE CENTER, BUFFALO COUNTY, NE

Your support  
is more vital  
than ever.  
Give now!



## THE FOOD BANK AND ITS PARTNERS NAVIGATE FUNDING CUTS

Food banks across the country are experiencing higher levels of need and a decrease in resources, and Food Bank for the Heartland is no exception.

Federal funding cuts are adding to the tremendous hardship faced by thousands of Heartland families. Recent cuts to USDA food availability have resulted in a loss of more than **500,000 meals** across our service area between March and July. Additional cuts are expected to SNAP, further straining the Food Bank, local pantries, and neighbors.

Members of the Food Bank's Executive Team recently met with partners in central Nebraska to better understand the need and how economic uncertainties are affecting their communities. Visits were made to Buffalo, Hall, Dawson, and Lincoln counties. **Each of these counties has experienced drastic increases in food insecurity levels, ranging from 33% to 48% over a two-year period, according to Feeding America.**

Despite the challenges we collectively face, these visits served as a stark reminder of the power and tenacity of the Heartland. Each of our partners expressed gratitude for the additional support they receive through gifts of time, talent, and treasure, further proving that no matter the trial, generosity always prevails.

### OUR MISSION

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



## A NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO

As you saw on the front cover, I recently had the privilege of meeting with several Network Partners in central Nebraska. These discussions are crucial to helping our team better understand the pressure our communities are experiencing, especially as we face significant federal funding cuts.

The Food Bank has been operating in crisis mode over the last five years. We've weathered catastrophic flooding, a government shutdown, the pandemic, and inflation. Now, with federal cuts affecting key nutrition programs—and consequently, our mission deployment—we will be facing yet more challenges ahead.

Funding cuts have forced the cancellation of truckloads of healthy food, including produce, protein, dairy, and eggs. These are essential and nutritious resources needed to help families thrive. Due to the high cost, those items cannot be easily replaced. Neighbors have cut these items from their budget for the same reasons.

Although economic uncertainty looms, I am reminded of the resilience of our partners, neighbors, and the incredible Food Bank team. We have overcome hardships before—and with your continued support—I'm certain we can do it again. In short—we are built for this. The path ahead will be difficult, but I look forward to working with you as we navigate these new challenges.



Brian Barks, President & CEO



Brian with Tamie Thurn, Executive Director of Cozad Pantry

## EXAMPLES OF COLLABORATION, COMMUNITY, AND KINDNESS

Over the last several months, our community has shown up to support our mission in various ways. The Food Bank could not deploy its mission without their critical support. **Thank you!** To learn more about happenings in and around the Food Bank, visit [FoodBankHeartland.org/Events](https://FoodBankHeartland.org/Events).



In March, members of the Food Bank joined the Mid-America Council and Scouting America—in partnership with United Way of the Midlands, Werner, and Target—for the kick-off of the annual Scouting for Food Drive to benefit the Food Bank. Through their efforts, the Scouts donated 21,827 pounds of food, resulting in more than 18,000 meals for Heartland neighbors in need.

In April, our Foodies guild hosted their annual Cocktails & Cans event in our Volunteer Center. About 70 community members gathered in our facility to network and learn more about the Food Bank. The event also provided guests with the opportunity to participate in a special volunteer activity. During the event, 776 BackPacks were packed, and over \$4,000 was raised in support of our mission.



In May, Doug Ruch—a man from Texas who was diagnosed with terminal cancer—stopped in Nebraska to volunteer at the Food Bank. After being given 12–18 months to live, Doug set off on a “Dying to Serve” tour to volunteer in every state. His visit to Nebraska marked the 18th state on his tour. Doug’s kindness and compassion for serving others inspired our entire team.

# FOOD INSECURITY CONTINUES TO RISE ACROSS THE HEARTLAND

Feeding America recently released its annual Map the Meal Gap Report—a nationwide, comprehensive view of food insecurity rates.

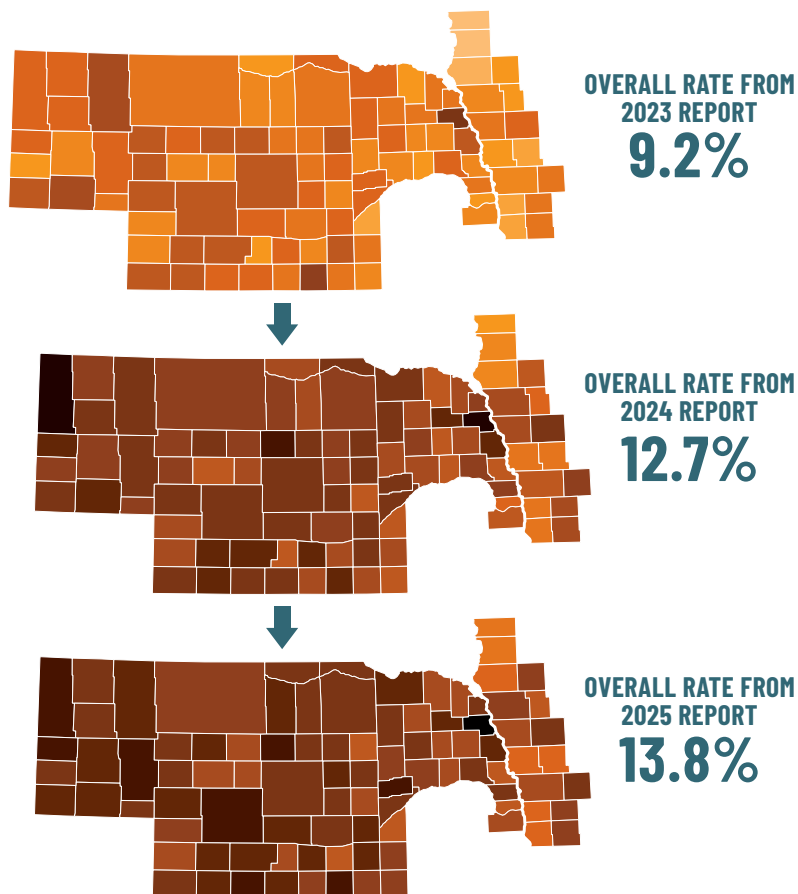
The 2025 study shows that hunger rates have increased across the Heartland. Now, **1 in 7 individuals, or more than 259,060 people, across Nebraska and western Iowa are facing hunger**, up from 1 in 8 individuals in last year's report. These are the highest numbers the Food Bank has seen in its history.

Food insecurity levels among children also slightly increased. Over the last two years, we've seen a nearly 59% increase in childhood hunger.

The maps on the right provide a stark visual representation of the significant increase in food insecurity levels over the last two years, according to Feeding America.

*"There's such a huge need, and it has gotten much worse after COVID. New requests run anywhere from 25 to 40 per month."*

—Pantry Partner, central Nebraska



Food Insecurity Rates

4% 5% 6% 7% 8% 9% 10% 11% 12% 13% 14% 15% 16% 17% 18%



Eloise, Pantry Participant & School Employee

## HOW OUR MISSION THRIVES, THANKS TO YOU!

Despite the uphill battles we're facing, the Food Bank is committed to ensuring our neighbors receive consistent access to healthy food. Eloise, a school worker and recipient of Miller Park's School-Based Mobile Pantry, recently shared with us how much the healthy food helps her and the school community thrive.

*"The mobile distribution helps me save money so I can buy other things I really need. I love using all the fruits and vegetables I get. I usually make it at home and share it with the kids here. A lot of them ask for apples and oranges."*

—Eloise, Pantry Participant & School Employee at Miller Park Elementary



## ADVOCATING FOR HEARTLAND NEIGHBORS

Food banks across the country are rallying together to increase support for vital programs and neighbors in need. Food Bank for the Heartland is no exception, as we continue our work at both the federal and state levels to advocate for proactive policies and push back against shifts and decreases in federal funding.

Our team was recently in Washington, D.C. to advocate on behalf of our partners and neighbors, highlighting the effects recent federal funding changes have had on food bank programs. We took this opportunity to encourage our federal delegation to enhance support for federal nutrition programs, including SNAP.

In the Nebraska Legislature, we continue to advocate for several food security policies. Our advocacy has seen positive movement in several proactive SNAP measures, including policies that would maintain SNAP's current gross eligibility at 165%. We are hopeful to see the final passage of this bill as the Unicameral wraps up its session. Additionally, State Senators have concluded their work on the State Budget, which includes additional funding for Nebraska food banks.

## DONOR BILL OF RIGHTS

We are 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—whether communicated electronically, orally, or in writing. We pledge to uphold the standards outlined in the Donor Bill of Rights© to ensure you consistently receive the highest level of service.

Questions? Contact [JKamppinen@FoodBankHeartland.org](mailto:JKamppinen@FoodBankHeartland.org).

## MEET THE FOOD BANK'S EXECUTIVE TEAM



**Brian Barks**  
President & CEO



**Donna Naimoli**  
Senior Executive Assistant



**Amber Durr**  
VP, Human Resources



**Calib Miller**  
VP, Community Impact



**Kelly Ptacek**  
VP, External Affairs



**Tresha Rodgers**  
VP, Business Operations



**MEAL  
MAKERS**  
Give monthly. Nourish daily.

## HELP FAMILIES THRIVE EVERY MONTH!

When you become a monthly **Meal Maker**, you provide critical meals to Heartland families all year. Higher prices on everyday essentials, paired with economic uncertainty—have put a greater need on consistent donations. Your monthly gift ensures we can respond to the growing need more efficiently, and we are urgently asking for your support.

**Thanks to Karla & Jim Franzluebbbers, donors who sign up to be a monthly Meal Maker will have their first month's gift matched—up to a total of \$10,000!**

Give monthly to nourish daily.  
Scan the QR code to sign up today!



*"Even with a full-time job, some months are hard. The pantry fills the gap and gives me peace of mind knowing my kids won't go to bed hungry."* —Mobile Pantry Recipient, Omaha, Nebraska