

THE DISH

WINTER 2024



HOW A FOOD BANK PROGRAM IS HELPING FAMILIES THRIVE

The line of cars at Wakonda Elementary in Omaha wrapped around the entire block at one of their recent mobile pantry distributions. **Volunteers said it was the longest line they had seen since the pandemic.**

Waiting in one of those vehicles was Michael—a single father who has dealt with his share of challenges. He was in a severe car accident that left him with ongoing medical issues, and with the additional pressures of inflation—he’s moved back in with his mom to help make ends meet.

Despite the hardships, Michael was overjoyed to receive fresh food from the Food Bank’s School-Based Mobile Pantry Program at Wakonda Elementary. “This is the most convenient pantry ever. It’s a perfect combination. I can pick up my kids from school and get food from the pantry.”

These mobile pantries are one-day, recurring distributions located outside of school buildings, providing a convenient source of food assistance to low-income students and their families.

For neighbors like Michael, it gives him the hope he needs to build a brighter future for his two children, William and Abby. “The food is great, and it helps so much. I’m on hard times but I can head home and cook a real dinner for my family now.” His children especially enjoy the fresh produce. “I love the apples,” said Abby.

As Heartland families continue to be impacted by inflation, more people than ever are turning to the Food Bank for assistance. Support for this program allows families to stretch their budget further and pay for other critical needs such as rent, utilities, childcare, and medicine.



“It’s really hard right now. Rent is going up. You can’t get an affordable house anymore. I’m so grateful for this pantry. This food will last us the entire month.”

— Michael



Scan the QR code or visit FoodBankHeartland.org/Dish to provide food and hope to families in need.



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 new year is synonymous with the word “lists”—lists of things we want to change, lists of things we want to do, and the list goes on—pun intended. With food insecurity rates rising, and a significant decrease in commodities—the challenges of 2023 overwhelmed us all. But I would be remiss if I didn’t highlight the inspiring moments along the way.

It is only through your generosity that we provided **22.2 million meals in FY 2023**. You rallied around our neighbors during their darkest moments—and graciously supported our mission. The Food Bank’s biggest asset is not our food, I believe it’s the community relationships we’ve fostered—and the picture below perfectly depicts that sentiment.



Walmart presenting the Food Bank with a grant check last October

Last fall, Walmart presented us with a grant for nearly \$180,000. These funds in part, will allow for a new Food Bank employee—helping us increase food donations and distribution. This support will also be used to provide grants for our partners in rural communities, increasing their capacity to pick up, store, and distribute food.

The generosity of our community fills me with hope for what we can accomplish together in 2024. My list this year consists of what I want to see more of—*compassion, collaboration, grit, and determination*—characteristics that make me proud to call the Heartland home. As you set your goals, I encourage you to reflect on what inspired you in 2023, and how we can lean on those experiences to make a difference in 2024.

Brian Barks
President & CEO



1. Brian Barks and community partners kick off the campaign
2. Food Bank collects donations at the Holiday Lights Festival
3. Shoppers help the Food Bank “Stuff the Truck”



2



3

THANK YOU FOR SHINING THE LIGHT ON HUNGER!

We are in awe of your generosity! Thanks to you, the 17th annual Shine the Light on Hunger campaign was a tremendous success. We set an ambitious goal to raise 5 million meals. To help support this goal, Conagra Brands Foundation, Farm Credit Services of America, The Scouler Foundation, and Baker’s generously stepped up with a match of \$245,000 to double gifts through the end of 2023. Stay tuned to our website, where we’ll share the results of the campaign after our press conference later this month.

OUR TOP FOOD DONORS MAKE AN IMPACT

Thank you to our top food donors of FY 2023. Collectively, they donated **7,485,062 meals** to the Food Bank! We are grateful for their contributions.

Aldi
Baker’s
Borden/LALA
Cargill
Conagra Brands
Costco
Dollar General
Hy-Vee

Mondelēz
Rotella’s Italian Bakery
Sam’s Club
Smithfield
Target
Tyson
Walmart

WOODHOUSE BACKPACK MATCH KICKS OFF TO MAKE TWICE THE IMPACT



Give 2X
the Backpacks



POWERED BY
WOODHOUSE

Right now, Woodhouse Auto Family will match your gift to the Backpack Program up to \$500,000, providing twice as many Backpack meals. A gift of \$164 will now sponsor TWO children for the entire school year! Donate today by scanning the QR code or visiting FoodBankHeartland.org/Woodhouse.

1 in 9 children is facing hunger in the Heartland. In the '22-'23 school year, our Backpack Program provided packs of weekend breakfasts and lunches to children in 252 schools across 112 districts in Nebraska and western Iowa. **1,270,264 meals** were distributed to children during the '22-'23 school year through your support of this program.



Volunteers also play a critical role in the Backpack program. In FY 2023, they packed nearly one million meals. Backpack meals were also prepared through the Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics Academy at Bryan High School. For some of these students, the program comes full circle, as they were recipients at a younger age. We are grateful for everyone's support!

BE A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

Whether you contact legislators or educate others, every conversation is a vital step forward in advocating for neighbors in need.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

The Farm Bill is a key piece of legislation being discussed at the federal level. TEFAP and SNAP are two essential programs in the Farm Bill that impact millions of Americans experiencing food insecurity. TEFAP provides over 20% of the food distributed through Feeding America's Network, and SNAP helped an estimated 40 million people access healthy foods in 2022.

Food Bank for the Heartland and Feeding America urge Congress to support and strengthen our nation's nutrition and agriculture programs in the Farm Bill. Contact your House of Representative member and your Senators—and advocate for strong TEFAP and SNAP support within the Farm Bill today.

STATE LEGISLATION

This month, legislative sessions began in both Nebraska and Iowa. We encourage everyone to continue contacting your delegation members in support of food security. Critical policy and funding decisions will be made over the next several months that will affect our nutritional programs, and how we serve the growing number of individuals facing hunger.

In Iowa, join us on Feb. 14 for "Fight Hunger Day at the Capitol" and take a stand against hunger. Learn more at iowafba.org/fight-hunger.



Ready to make your voice heard? Visit FoodBankHeartland.org/Advocacy to learn more.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED THIS YEAR

With inflation and food prices remaining high, thousands of families and individuals across Nebraska and western Iowa are finding it harder to put food on the table. Here are some of the ways you can make a difference in 2024 and help our neighbors access nutritious food.

GIVE



Monetary donations allow the Food Bank to purchase food and fund important programs to alleviate hunger in our communities.

VOLUNTEER



Volunteers are the lifeline of our mission. Grab your friends, coworkers or family members and help pack meals for our neighbors in need.

HOST A FOOD DRIVE



Food drives raise awareness of hunger in our communities and play an essential role in the fight against hunger. Free collection boxes are available at the Food Bank.

TAKE ACTION TODAY!

Learn more about how you can engage with us through any of these actions and more at FoodBankHeartland.org/get-involved.



Give monthly. Nourish daily.

SUPPORT OUR MISSION EVERY MONTH!

As food insecurity levels continue to rise, your compassion is critical. Monthly Meal Makers help ensure the Food Bank is well prepared to provide healthy meals for Heartland neighbors every month. Sign up today, and your gift will be matched for three months—up to \$10,000—thanks to Stephanie Wernig, Ph.D.



I never thought I'd need a food pantry. It has been very helpful. If it wasn't for the Food Bank, we wouldn't be existing right now. Thank you!

— Pam, Pantry Recipient



An Evening with

GAIL SIMMONS

February 15, 2024 · CHI Health Center

Emcee: KETV NewsWatch 7's
Julie Cornell



GET YOUR CELEBRITY CHEF TICKETS!

Join us at the Food Bank's 23rd annual Celebrity Chef event on Thursday, February 15. Judge of Bravo's Top Chef, Gail Simmons, will share her favorite recipes and passion for food. Plus, KETV's Julie Cornell will host as our emcee for a fabulous night of food and fundraising!

Your purchase will make a significant impact for the thousands of neighbors facing hunger—helping the Food Bank raise the equivalent of 2.2 million meals for children, families, seniors, and veterans. Get your tickets today or make a donation to support the fundraiser at FoodBankHeartland.org/CelebrityChef.

Visit FoodBankHeartland.org/MealMakers or scan the QR code below to make a positive impact today.

