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The year 2019 is our “Year of the Volunteer.” As such, I anticipated writing about how important volunteers are to River Bend Foodbank. And that would be true. We currently have 30 staff and 100 times more volunteers. If you count the volunteers at our 300 partner agencies, there are 2-3 times more than that working to end hunger in our communities. You sort donations, pack backpacks, distribute food at Mobile Food Pantries throughout our service area, and so many other things.

But as I reflected on this topic, recent interactions I had with two of you came to mind, reminding me of how important volunteering with us is to you. Allow me to share their stories ...

The first was from a local high schooler. In his words, “The night we volunteered, hungry people came to get a variety of food to last the next month. It was astonishing to see all these people who needed food. That night we served thousands of pounds of food to thousands of people. It felt amazing to help someone in need. After this I realized what community service meant to me. It is not about the hours or what is required. Community service is about helping those in need.”

The second was from a widow who lost her husband in a tragic accident just two years ago. Since volunteering was so much a part of who he was, she looked for a local organization where she could carry on that legacy. She shared, “I love how you create a sense of belonging with the groups that volunteer. I feel a sense of community. It feels like family. I have found a home here.”

In this newsletter, you will also read Maitreyi’s story, a local youth who recently shared her experiences volunteering at River Bend Foodbank, along with other information about volunteering. We love everything you do. We could not do what we do without you. But we also love how volunteering here is so meaningful to so many of you.

One other thing about volunteering with River Bend Foodbank. We refuse to force a square peg into a round hole. We will not twist your arm into doing something you do not enjoy. We want you to love what you do, and if you do not, we will help you find something else. That is what keeps you coming back, thousands of you, to the benefit of so many hungry people.

Together we can solve hunger.™

Michael P. Miller
President & CEO

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That night we served thousands of pounds of food to thousands of people. It felt amazing to help someone in need.

- High School Volunteer

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When Maitreyi Shrikhande, a freshman at Davenport Central High School, began volunteering many years ago, she never imagined the lessons she would learn.

Maitreyi volunteers at a variety of organizations in the Quad Cities, one being the River Bend Foodbank. In 6th grade, she designed cards for her 12th birthday that she then sold and donated the proceeds to the Foodbank which provided 1,080 meals! After designing the cards, she and her family got involved in our Backpack Program, which provides children with food to take home over the weekend while school is in session. Maitreyi comes to the Foodbank every few months (in between her very busy schedule!) to help children who would otherwise go hungry. She loves the Backpack Program specifically because “I may be helping one of my classmates who struggles with hunger, and that makes me feel good,” said Maitreyi.

Volunteering has taught Maitreyi how to deal with conflict, work with others, and has made her happier. She even gave a TEDxYouth speech at the Putnam Museum in January titled “The Unexpected Outcomes of Volunteering.” Listeners were so inspired by her words that they signed up to volunteer at River Bend Foodbank! If you do not currently volunteer, Maitreyi wants you to know that “Every person can make a difference, no matter how small.” If you make the time, volunteering will reward you in return.

“Every person can make a difference, no matter how small.”
- Maitreyi Shirkhande
Women Fighting Hunger

INAUGURAL EVENT
MARCH 28, 2019

With a goal of raising awareness and funds to end childhood hunger in our community, the inaugural Women Fighting Hunger event was held on March 28, 2019 at Rhythm City Casino. Nataly Kogan, founder and CEO of Happier, Inc., shared her hunger story as a child and how she uses those life lessons to empower others. Over 500 women attended, assembled 900 backpacks, and raised enough money to provide 135,000 meals. Thank you to all who joined us for this inspiring evening!

VOLUNTEER UPDATE:
AS OF JANUARY 2019

• 2,206 volunteers
• 58% of our goal for 2018-19

WE ARE RIGHT ON TARGET!

UPCOMING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:

Our volunteer needs are always changing. Please visit our website to view our current opportunities and to sign up at riverbendfoodbank.org/donate-time

If you are unable to volunteer, consider making a financial contribution. $1 provides 5 meals to hungry people throughout eastern Iowa and western Illinois. Donations can be made by visiting our website at riverbendfoodbank.org/donate-money

Continue spreading the word to your family and friends who might be interested in volunteering with us!