THOUGHT for THOUGHT

SUMMER 2019
NEWSLETTER

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We were excited to announce recently a $1.3 million gift we received from John Deere and the John Deere Foundation over the next three years. This is the largest financial commitment ever made to River Bend Foodbank. The funds will support closing the Meal Gap and implementing a new initiative that will not only feed people, but help them stabilize their lives to the point of no longer needing assistance — an effort we are calling “Feeding People Today & Ending Hunger Tomorrow.”

I want to share my favorite part of this announcement. The following day I was walking the warehouse, as I like to do, checking in with our team and greeting agency partners. One agency volunteer was ecstatic. “I am so excited about the gift we got from John Deere!” she exclaimed. She did not say, “you.” She did not say, “River Bend Foodbank.” She said, “we.”

I loved that. Ending hunger is not work that I nor the staff are doing alone. Between food donors, volunteers, financial contributors, and partner agencies, there are over ten thousand people involved in this effort. Sue had it exactly right. It is “we” who are doing this work, together.

This newsletter includes the results of our recently completed fiscal year, highlighted by a new record of more than 17 million meals distributed to hungry people. This is 24 percent more than the previous fiscal year and a full 2.3 times the meal distribution we set a goal of tripling by 2025. We recap our “Year of the Volunteer,” and with the school year starting, focus on children’s programs.

I do want to make clear that the Deere grant is funding two very specific initiatives, so your support remains essential to sustaining efforts such as these children’s programs. Thank you for that support. We are closer to ending hunger in eastern Iowa and western Illinois than ever before. And make no mistake about it, it is definitely “we.”

Together we can solve hunger.

—Michael P. Miller
President & CEO

**2019 UPDATE**

Our Mobile Food Pantry Program has grown to an average of 19 Mobile Pantries being held each month throughout the 23 counties that we serve. Volunteers distribute a truckload of food to guests through a farmers’ market-style distribution. Most of these Mobile Food Pantries are providing more than 10,000 meals each.

There are currently 42 School Pantries being run by volunteers throughout our service area. These pantries are safe places within a school where students and their families can access food items stocked directly from our warehouse. Students often have younger siblings or other family members who are missing meals. All families have student(s) at the school and are selected by school administrators. The goal is to offset food insecurity for children at a critical point in their development.

During the 2018/2019 school year, 98,722 Backpacks were distributed through our Backpack Program every Friday to students who identified as going hungry over the weekend. This program provides a sack of nutritious, easy-to-prepare foods to children who would otherwise go hungry.

**Meal Distribution Numbers**

- **Backpack Program**: 98,722 backpacks were given out at 80 schools in 2019.
- **Mobile Food Pantry**: 1,705,033 meals were delivered at 229 Mobile Food Pantries.
- **Partner Agencies**: 259 Partner Agencies distributed 11,212,422 meals in 2019.
- **School Pantries**: 42 school pantries provided 676,382 meals.
- **Senior Pantries**: 8 senior pantries supplied 223,201 meals.
- **Senior Produce Initiative**: 36 produce drops were made, offering 13,876 meals.
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This past fiscal year was designated as the “Year of the Volunteer.” We celebrated our current volunteers as well as recruited new volunteers. We kicked off the campaign by having a Volunteer Appreciation Night last fall. This event gave us the opportunity to honor our current volunteers who dedicate so much of their time to our mission.

We hosted fun volunteer theme sessions throughout the year, such as Ugly Sweater Day and Twin Day to encourage current and new volunteers to join us to assemble Backpacks, sort food, and volunteer at our Mobile Food Pantries.

Our goal was to have a total of 3,750 volunteers join us during the “Year of the Volunteer” campaign. We are proud to announce we had 3,933 volunteers donate 15,796 hours and had 200 different organizations join us. Thank you to all! We could not serve the hungry without our dedicated and loyal volunteers!