WINTER 2020 NEWSLETTER

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

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Last December, our board and staff gathered for our annual holiday lunch. Instead of the usual, “Introduce yourself and tell us your favorite Christmas carol,” we asked everyone to share a moment from the year that connected to the mission of River Bend Foodbank.

It took over an hour. **There were touching stories of handing out food to hungry people, how appreciative they were, and the partnerships we have with agencies, schools, and senior centers.** One told of how our Foodbank family had helped them through the year, and another of how his daughter talks to her grandmother about not throwing away food.

When it got to me, my most memorable moment was that moment right then. It had taken so many different things from each member of our team to achieve what we did last year. I told the group that I could not decide whether it had been an amazing year or it had been crazy. Probably both.

After distributing 15 million meals in 2018, we distributed over 18.5 million meals in 2019. It took so many things to make that happen, including opening new food pantries at our local shopping malls. This has also taken a heroic effort from our partner agencies, including FISH in Knox County, featured in this newsletter.

**Two new things we are excited to share with you are our Service Insights and Client Empowerment initiatives, which are designed to track not only the outputs of our work in meals, but the outcomes of our work in terms of lives changed.** And we have an update on last fall’s Student Hunger Drive and the upcoming Women Fighting Hunger event.

Only with your help, we are now **Feeding People Today and Ending Hunger Tomorrow**, helping more people than ever before.

Thank you so very much,

Michael P. Miller
President & CEO
FISH of Galesburg serves all of Knox County and is 100% volunteer run. Their mission is “providing food for those in need.” Diane Copeland, the organization's President for the past four years, joined FISH ten years ago and tells people that FISH found her. The pantry serves around 541 households every month. In January of 2019 FISH converted to a Client Choice system which allows their guests to shop for the food they need and only take what they want and will use. Diane says this has been a wonderful change for their pantry and she loves the sense of freedom it gives their guests. This past year has also been filled with hurdles as FISH lost some of its offsite storage space as well as half of their parking lot. While those issues have been temporarily resolved, it made for a challenging year.

While FISH enjoys the government commodities they receive, they are also grateful for the guidance given to their organization as well as the support of their community. With the help of River Bend Foodbank, they were able to secure a $20,000 grant from the Western Illinois Regional Council which helped them purchase food from River Bend.

“We wouldn’t be able to provide the amount of food we do to our guests without River Bend,” says Diane.

Thank you, FISH, for being a partner in the fight against hunger in Knox County!

SouthPark Mall Food Pantry opened in March of last year followed by the NorthPark Mall Food Pantry in July. Both pantries have a part-time staff member but are primarily run by volunteers. The SouthPark Mall Food Pantry serves an average of 211 families per distribution, while the NorthPark Mall Food Pantry serves an average of 238 families. Guests are able to visit their respective mall food pantry once per week, with each pantry open three times every week. Both pantries have been instrumental in feeding the hungry in Scott (12% food insecurity) and Rock Island (11.2% food insecurity) Counties.
FEEDING PEOPLE TODAY AND ENDING HUNGER TOMORROW

In June of 2019, River Bend Foodbank adopted the utilization of Link2Feed (L2F). L2F provides food banks with an online database to collect information to better understand root causes of hunger and increase community impact. Learning more about our guests can help us understand what preventive measures could be put in place to avoid people initially becoming food insecure, or what it would take to overcome food insecurity.

On July 30, 2019, we launched L2F at our first program site, SouthPark Mall Food Pantry. Since then, we have entered over 2,700 client profiles and continue onboarding approximately 100 new guests per week with the help of volunteers and staff. On December 2nd, 2019, Christ United Methodist Church in Silvis became our very first Partner Agency to launch L2F, and we will be continuing to expand this fiscal year with numerous other sites. Expansion across our diverse service area is key; the data collected will inform our decision-making at both a programmatic and agency level.

In December 2019, River Bend Foodbank created a new department to encompass both the data we are collecting and the strategies that will be developed from the statistics to help overcome food insecurity: Service Insights and Client Empowerment. In collaboration with the national Ending Hunger Community of Practice, we will utilize our local client data with research to sculpt best practices for ending hunger for the River Bend Foodbank service area.

STUDENT HUNGER DRIVE

The Student Hunger Drive occurred from October 7 – November 14. During the six-week drive, students from seventeen area schools provided 568,317 meals! The nutritious food collected will provide meals for hungry children, families, and seniors in eastern Iowa and western Illinois. The Student Hunger Drive is about more than just collecting food — it gives students the opportunity to develop organizational and life skills as they work to accomplish a common goal — HELP END HUNGER. Thank you, students, for all of your hard work and dedication! Together, we’re teaming up to tackle hunger!


TIME IS RUNNING OUT

to purchase your ticket(s) for our 2nd Annual Women Fighting Hunger event!

Thursday, March 26, 2020
Rhythm City Casino
7077 Elmore Ave., Davenport, IA

Featuring a keynote by Kelly Corrigan, New York Times bestselling author of Tell Me More, Glitter and Glue, and The Middle Place.

Only 10 tables remain!
$425 for a table of 10, $50 for a individual ticket

Purchase tickets at riverbendfoodbank.org/women-fighting-hunger