

# FOOD *for* THOUGHT

*Coming Together for Good*

MARCH 2023 NEWSLETTER

RIVERBENDFOODBANK.ORG



## GALESBURG BRANCH: 90-DAY UPDATE

River Bend Food Bank, Galesburg Branch officially opened its doors to serve hunger-relief partners with a ribbon-cutting celebration on November 15, 2022. Since then, the FISH of Galesburg food pantry and dozens of other partners have been able to visit the Galesburg Branch to pick up food orders rather than making the much longer trek to the Food Bank's Davenport, Iowa location.

*"The folks at Helping Hands of Roseville are thrilled with the new Galesburg facility. From our drivers to the volunteer unloaders and even the board. Many volunteers have mentioned how much they like the quick turnaround better and how fast we can get our work done since the change."*

*- David Mahoney, Helping Hands board member*

The Galesburg Branch has also started receiving monetary support and large-scale food donations from local manufacturers, distributors, and retailers, which helps ensure there is plenty of food for hunger-relief partners to take to their sites for people in need. Sitka Salmon Shares, located in Galesburg, donated over **1,600 meals** worth of frozen, fresh salmon and whitefish. The Knox County Pork Producers Association donated **1,100 meals** worth of ground pork.

"The donations we have received already have been fantastic," says Aaron Barton, site director at the Galesburg Branch. "High-quality frozen seafood and pork from local farmers — It is great to have healthier options filling our freezer and cooler. This is the community's food bank, and people and businesses have seen the progress and are eager to support us."



See stories and learn more about the Galesburg Branch by following us on  
**Facebook: @RBFBGalesburg**

# A LETTER FROM THE CEO

For this first newsletter of 2023, let me start by saying THANK YOU. When I returned in October of 2022 to River Bend Food Bank after serving as Executive Director of Feed My People food bank in Wisconsin, I was met with a warm welcome but an urgent need to drastically increase our food supplies. Food insecurity jumped 60% in mid-2022, and with food donations down by 40%, our Food Bank was struggling to meet the elevated needs our hunger-relief partners were experiencing.

In late 2022, we asked you for help and you showed us what a caring community looks like. Together, we were able to purchase **1,257,291 meals** to supplement our inventory. This crucial support means that our 400+ partners across the region had access to foods like fresh produce, dairy products, and proteins that they might not otherwise have been able to get for the people they serve. THANK YOU.

Because of you, we are making progress. We are prioritizing getting food to our neighbors in need. With our new warehouse in Galesburg, we're now able to store and distribute food from three locations across the region. This means we've been able to make adjustments to our original plans for capital expansion — saving time and eliminating the need to

raise additional funds for the project. We're making the best and most efficient use of your generous dollars and putting focus on the Food Bank's needs. We remain committed to completing essential upgrades and additions, including expanding our volunteer space, creating a secure food-receiving area, and providing accessible, weather-ready pickup docks for our hunger-relief partners.

These key components will keep the Food Bank in the best position to feed people today while being prepared for any future challenges. We value and appreciate the generous support you have all shown for this project, and we look forward to celebrating its completion with you all!

I am thrilled to be back home, working alongside all of you to make sure no one goes hungry in the neighborhoods I love. I'm inspired every day by our community's passion for building a hunger-free region.



**Thank you for your continued support in 2023.**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy R." followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Nancy Renkes, President & CEO  
River Bend Food Bank

## MAKE THE LINE SHORTER: LEND YOUR VOICE TO THE 2023 FARM BILL



When you think about volunteering at a food bank or food pantry, you may think about “feeding the line” by packing and distributing boxes or backpacks filled with nutritious food.

This support is essential to making sure no one goes hungry in our community. In addition to donating your time to the fight against hunger, you can donate your voice to help legislators understand the importance of programs that help “make the line shorter.”

Every five years, Congress passes a new Farm Bill — the next opportunity to influence this vital bill is in 2023. The Farm Bill supports our nation's farmers, promotes rural development, and protects critical nutrition programs. Almost three-quarters of the bill's funding supports nutrition programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

SNAP is our country's most effective anti-hunger program, providing temporary food assistance that

is timely and targeted to households in need. SNAP is crucial to River Bend Food Bank's mission to end hunger, which is why we help people apply for SNAP benefits. SNAP also supports our communities in other ways:

- Two-thirds of those who receive SNAP benefits are among our most vulnerable, including children, seniors, and people living with disabilities.
- Every dollar spent in SNAP benefits helps generate between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in local economic activity.
- Every year, over 40 million Americans utilize SNAP to temporarily supplement their food budgets, allowing them to buy fresh produce, proteins, and other healthy foods during challenging times in their lives.

**Lend your voice! Learn more by visiting [www.riverbendfoodbank.org/advocate](http://www.riverbendfoodbank.org/advocate) and signing up to get periodic emails with information and education on the 2023 Farm Bill.**

# PUTTING THE “UNITY” IN COMMUNITY: THREE STORIES OF COMING TOGETHER TO KEEP OUR NEIGHBORS FED



## Javier Gonzalez, State Farm Agent

In late 2022, Javier Gonzalez proudly made his first gift to River Bend Food Bank.

Inspired because he knew firsthand the impact that getting help in a time of need can have, Gonzalez says he’s happy he can now give back. “I remember going to food pantries as a kid to eat. I vividly remember getting chocolate popsicles,” he recalls. “I remember times when my family struggled, and food pantries helped us.”

Gonzalez’s first experience with River Bend Food Bank was when he worked in a grocery store that donated food to the Food Bank.



“I remember being thankful that someone in the community was helping feed those in need.”

Knowing that children can be most impacted by hunger, Gonzalez says his own experience made it an easy decision to give back this year. “My biggest soft spot is kids in need. I try to do what I can to help in those situations, having been in that position myself as a young child.”

Gonzalez encourages others to be thankful for what they have and what they can share. “Our “little bit” may still be more than others here have,” he says. “In some cases, someone would love to have our leftovers or that meal we threw away because the recipe wasn’t right.”

**Gonzalez says he hopes his support will help families, and that in the future, as he grows his business, he can help as many families as possible.**



## Quad Cities Community Foundation

In December of 2022, the Quad Cities Community Foundation and 12 other local funders and individual donors raised **\$224,000** to help River Bend Food Bank feed children, adults, and seniors facing hunger this winter. Catalyzed by a commitment of \$50,000 from the Community Foundation and a match challenge from the Hubbell-Waterman Foundation, the joint fundraising effort exceeded its \$200,000 goal in just two weeks, reflecting the urgent need for support and the Quad Cities community’s ability to come together decisively around a common cause.

Randy and Debra Sergesketter were two of the community members who gave from their Community Foundation fund. “We always feel good about giving back to our community, and the connections the Community Foundation helps us make ensure our gifts have a larger impact,” they said. “The food bank is critical, and no Quad Citizens should go hungry.”



A local business with a history of community impact stepped in to help, too. “We are pleased to join the Quad Cities Community Foundation and other community donors in helping River Bend Food Bank fight local food insecurities,” said Linda Andry, President and CEO of Ascentra Credit Union. **“Ascentra is committed to supporting our members and the communities that we serve, and we encourage others to get involved through volunteering and donations.”**



## The Impact

The combined efforts of individuals, businesses, and organizations across the region gave the Food Bank support during an incredibly challenging year.

In December, the Food Bank’s inventory supply finally reached a level not seen since February of 2022 — a critical positive step during a year when food insecurity dramatically increased due to inflation and the ongoing economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Proteins like ham and turkey and culturally specific items such as hominy and maseca corn flour are not often donated but help offer guests foods that meet their families’ dietary needs. **Because of the community’s generous support, the Food Bank has been able to temporarily supplement its donations by purchasing some of these much-needed foods for pantries to have on hand.**



## THANK YOU!

To see more of the important support the Food Bank received, check out our social media pages and follow @riverbendfoodbank on Facebook and Instagram.





SAVE THE DATE

# GREAT GIVE DAY



MAY 17!



Scan to learn more!

This 24-hour online giving event invites our community to come together to celebrate and support the St. Stephen's Branch of River Bend Food Bank!

**Organizations that raise the most money will be eligible to receive bonus funds** from local partners and sponsors through hourly and grand prizes.

So, please mark your calendars and **give as generously as you can to St. Stephen's on Great Give Day!**

**Gifts can be made at [www.greatgiveday.org](http://www.greatgiveday.org) on May 17.** Minimum donation amount is \$10.

## CORN FOR A CAUSE: BUSHEL'S FOR HUNGER GOING STRONG SINCE 2010

Bushels for Hunger is a joint program coordinated by the Rock Island, Henry, and Mercer County Farm Bureaus. Farmers can donate grain at nine participating grain elevators in the region to help fight food insecurity in the communities that River Bend Food Bank serves. During the 2022-2023 harvest season, a total of \$23,603.13 was raised. The program, now in its 13<sup>th</sup> year, has contributed over \$300,000, which equates to over **1.5 million meals** to River Bend Food Bank. Funds raised in this effort provide crucial support to get food to neighbors in need. **Thank you to all the farmers who generously give through Bushels for Hunger!**



Photo courtesy of Chris Martin Reid

### Board of Directors

#### Officers

- Janet Mathis  
*Chair*
- Marie Ziegler  
*Vice Chair*
- Daniel Joiner  
*Secretary*

- Rob Leibfried  
*Treasurer*
- Trish Huber  
*Immediate Past Chair*

#### Directors

- Chris Beason
- Chad Lewis
- Jan Martin
- Matt O'Brien
- Kevin O'Hara
- Ben Patterson
- Tami Petsche
- Nancy Renkes

### Find Food

Find a pantry near you. Learn if you qualify for state food assistance programs.

### Volunteer

See individual and small group opportunities near you. Learn how your organization can get members involved.

### Give

Host a funds drive. Find out if your employer matches donations and support River Bend Food Bank's mission.



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