

FOOD *for* THOUGHT

Multiplying Efforts for Good

JUNE 2023 NEWSLETTER

RIVERBENDFOODBANK.ORG

MULTIPLYING KINDNESS: SHARING BLESSINGS TO MAKE A BIG IMPACT

John Balzer's love for his family and his community radiates through the computer screen. On a video call with our Director of Marketing, Liz Dierolf, he chuckles and adjusts his glasses before sharing a story about one of his grandchildren, grinning all the while. John donated to River Bend Food Bank in 2022 as one of the first gifts made through his newly established Family Donation Program. Hoping to nurture a multi-generational legacy of philanthropy through his children and grandchildren, John gave each member of his family the opportunity to donate to an organization they were passionate about.

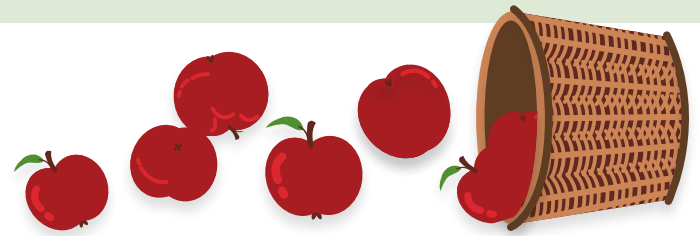


Why did you decide to give back to River Bend Food Bank?

I grew up in Davenport, Iowa. I met my wife, Melanie, at the University of Iowa, served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War, and went on to grow a successful consulting business for the

next two decades. Melanie passed away in 2020 after battles with lymphoma of the brain and leukemia. Melanie and I had always given back. She loved helping animals and volunteered with shelters to transport dogs to no-kill shelters. After she left us, we donated her car (which I'd had outfitted with things to keep the dogs safe during transportation) to an anti-cruelty society. I wanted to do something with my children and grandchildren to continue our legacy of giving back.

In March of 2022, it came to me that I should start a Family Donation Program. I gave each of my children and grandchildren a sum of money to gift to any organization they wanted to help. One donation we made was to support River Bend Food Bank and the work you do to make sure people have food in times of need.



This year you're doing something to multiply your donation — what can you tell us about it?

Since I grew up in the area served by the River Bend Food Bank, I wanted to make a donation where I could see it have an immediate impact. I toured the food bank and was impressed with the management team and the organization of the warehouse.

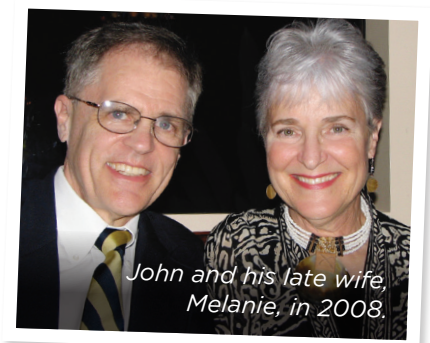
In the current economy, everyone, including the Food Bank, finds it more difficult to have sufficient funds to feed all of those who are asking for assistance. Now, more than ever, it is incumbent upon each of us to share our blessings to help our neighbors.

I'm calling this year my family's "Year of Giving." I want to do something bigger and more meaningful. I want our support to go and grow and reach more people. That's why **I'm pledging \$30,000 to match donations** to River Bend Food Bank. I want to challenge the community to help as many people as we can.

What do you hope comes from your Family Donation Program?

I believe very strongly that there's a world of opportunity to give back, and we have to think about "what can I leave behind to make a difference for people."

If you can, put your money into action to help people less fortunate. Collectively, we can make the world around us better for everyone.



John and his late wife, Melanie, in 2008.

In July, a special mailing will go out to the community from John. Every donation made in honor of his Family Donation Program will be doubled, up to \$30,000! Look for it in your mailbox or visit riverbendfoodbank.org/givewithJohn to make a gift online today.





A LETTER FROM OUR NEW CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Hello, my name is Chris and ... I am a foodie. But probably not the same kind of foodie you are used to meeting. I'm not the kind that has an interest in the latest food fads, wants every bite of a meal to be an experience, or has to delve into flavor and food pairings. I'm a foodie because I've spent my entire career working in and around grocery stores, food and beverage

wholesalers, and food manufacturing facilities. I remain fascinated by how food is produced, distributed, and eventually merchandised to create impulses that encourage each of us to buy.

In the two and a half years I've served as River Bend Food Bank's food sourcing manager, I have seen the food industry challenged like never before. The pandemic stalled the supply chain and put limits on what major food manufacturers could produce and deliver. As the pandemic eased, inflation rose to levels that most had never experienced. The food shopping experience changed as people transitioned to online ordering rather than in-store shopping. And who can forget, if you were brave enough to venture to a store, those "fun days" of wiping down shopping carts, hand sanitizer at every turn, and donning masks to slow the spread of an invisible virus. The usually full aisles

were barren, and choices were limited. Despite being a "foodie," these were experiences I never imagined in my wildest dreams.

And as bad as that shopping experience was for most of us, it's clear that individuals who are experiencing food insecurity don't have an overall pleasing shopping experience either, though not necessarily for those same reasons. Imagine grocery shopping and standing in the aisle deciding between spending money on healthy, nutritious food for your family or paying that month's medical bill — that's what 64% of our guests face.

I was thrilled to accept the position of Chief Operating Officer in April and contribute to our mission in new ways. The work we do here at the Food Bank is changing the experience for so many families. We are striving to make each visit to our pantries and to our hunger-relief partners' pantries remembered for all the good reasons. It makes my foodie heart grow to see the improvements that we are making and the ripple effect our work has in the communities we serve. **I look forward to working with all of you to build a hunger-free future for our community and look forward to the day when everyone's food shopping experience is enjoyable.**



Chris Ford, Chief Operating Officer
River Bend Food Bank

GREAT GIVE DAY 2023: COMMUNITY FOR A CAUSE

Great Give Day is a 24-hour online giving event established by the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque in 2014 to celebrate and support local nonprofits and build a stronger community. This year's Great Give Day was held on Wednesday, May 17. Our St. Stephen's Branch, through the generosity of individuals and sponsoring businesses, raised over 17,000 meals in a single day!

Your collective efforts help make sure children and adults struggling with food insecurity can rely on the St. Stephen's Branch in times of crisis. Thank you!

Learn more about the St. Stephen's Branch and see this year's participating nonprofit organizations at greatgiveday.org/ststephens.





THE FARM BILL SUPPORTS FARMERS AND FAMILIES

River Bend Food Bank depends on the generosity of our community to keep our three warehouses full of food. Donations of money and product account for almost 80 percent of the food we provide to families facing hunger. To make up the remainder, River Bend Food Bank relies on USDA programs like The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) to keep shelves stocked. In FY2022, these programs provided approximately 4.2 million meals in our service area.

TEFAP is funded through the **U.S. Farm Bill**, which is up for reauthorization this year. The program purchases food from U.S. farmers and supplies it to food banks so they can provide nutritious food to families. TEFAP is a lifeline for rural communities. River Bend Food Bank's advocacy team will be working with partners and volunteers to urge Congress to pass a strong bipartisan bill that strengthens critical anti-hunger programs like TEFAP.

To learn more about how you can lend your voice in the fight against hunger, visit our website and sign up to get email updates on the 2023 Farm Bill at riverbendfoodbank.org/advocacy.

LEARNING THROUGH LIZ: WOMEN FIGHTING HUNGER KEYNOTE SPEAKER HAS FIRSTHAND HUNGER EXPERIENCE

The 3rd Annual Women Fighting Hunger event on March 30 brought together nearly 450 women (and men!) and raised over **\$80,000** — all for the mission of building hunger-free communities. “No one gets where they’re going alone,” Liz Murray shared during her keynote address. “Cynicism is the atrophy of your heart. Remember that YOU can HELP.” Formerly homeless, Liz Murray transformed her life of despair into an inspiring journey of determination, hope, and hard-won success. **THANK YOU to our generous sponsors, table captains, and attendees for working with us to make sure no one goes hungry. We look forward to seeing you again next year!**



NORTHPARK MALL FOOD PANTRY — NEW LOCATION FOR A TRUSTED COMMUNITY RESOURCE

In May, the NorthPark Mall Food Pantry moved to a new location. Just a few hundred yards from the spot held since its opening in 2019, the new space (inside the shopping mall) will offer a larger, more convenient grocery store-style layout for guests in need. Mark, a food pantry guest, says, "I'm looking forward to being inside in bad weather. I shop for my mom, and the hours are better for me too." Currently, the pantry sees an average of 600 families every week and welcomes anyone in need to shop for food. Joseph Barro, a volunteer at the pantry, says, "I am excited to help out and to start working at the new location."

Want to help? Volunteers can sign up online to support the Food Bank's hosted pantries at riverbendfoodbank.org/volunteer.



Before



After



Outside

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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.



**RIVER BEND
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