

Feeding Hope

2023 FALL NEWSLETTER | WOFB.ORG



No Ohioan Should Go Hungry

Still impacting Ohio, the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic is being felt by the underserved and vulnerable local households experiencing food security challenges. Some of your neighbors are currently suffering from the feeling of hunger due to a rise in food costs, skipped meals, and the stress of balancing household finances or purchasing food. For others, change of employment, transportation costs, and a decrease in food benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can explain the current challenges new neighbors utilizing various meal programs the food bank provides are facing.

The Ohio Association of Foodbanks conducted a survey, 2023 Statewide Study of Hunger in Ohio, to clarify specific challenges neighbors have been and are currently experiencing in relation to hunger and food security. An anonymous month-long survey conducted throughout the Ohio food bank's meal program recipients around May 2023, represented 2,087 residents of 32.6% of all Ohio zip codes.

“The food bank helps with food and other necessities my family currently needs to get by. Giving me a sense of peace knowing we have the support.”



The findings of this survey noted the similar obstacles of higher food costs, having children and/or seniors in the home, medical issues, and skipped meals were common challenges discovered throughout the state. The findings also discovered additional similarities such as:

- 68% had to choose between food and transportation/gas
- 66% had to trade off food and utilities
- 65% of households served by food banks have adults in their household that cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food in the last 12 months, including more than 37% that did so almost every month over the last year.
- 55% were choosing between food and medicine/healthcare
- 50% had to choose between food and housing
- 37% said they will rely on food banks meal programs more often in the next coming months.

Lisa Hamler-Fugitt Executive Director, Ohio Association of Foodbanks, stated in the May 2023 release, “Ohio’s foodbanks are already at our

(Continued on Page 4)



THE FOOD BANK MISSION

Everyone should have access to healthy, nutritious food. Together with our partners, we provide food to those in need.

OUR VISION

Ending Hunger Together

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Find us online!
www.wofb.org



Words of Gratitude from the CEO



Gratitude is generally defined as focusing on what's good in our lives and being thankful for the things we do have, such as clean water, family, transportation, having a place to live, and access to healthy food. Neighbors experiencing food insecurity may not have access to basic human needs such as clean water, healthy food, and even hygiene products required for a healthy, active life.

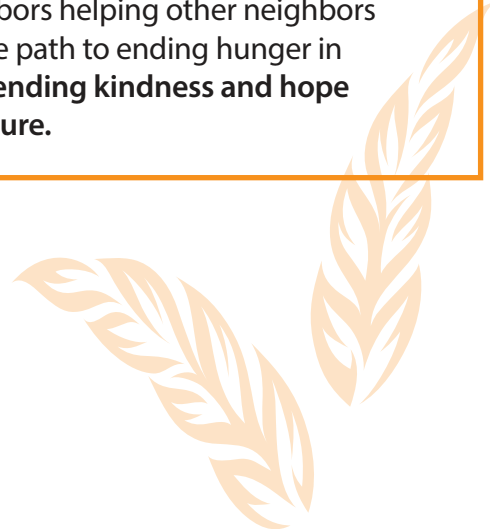
As the leader of an organization that provides resources for neighbors experiencing hunger, I'm incredibly grateful for caring neighbors like you. After a disaster like Covid, communities may feel the gravity of the effects for years. When I see how many people care, really care, about their neighbors who can't afford enough basic needs like food and then seeing those same people act and help make those resources available is necessary.

I am grateful when I get to see neighbors helping other neighbors in need and making an impact on the path to ending hunger in our communities. **Thank you for extending kindness and hope to our neighbors now and in the future.**

Thank you for caring!

Tommie Harner

Chief Executive Officer



OUR IMPACT

Last year, together with our community members, supporters, partner agencies, and volunteers, West Ohio Food Bank:



HELPED

49,635
Un-Duplicated
People in West
Central Ohio



REACHED

199 Mobile &
Community-Wide
Food Distributions



PROVIDED

6,667,480
Meals



RESCUED

3,174,880
Pounds of
Groceries From
Going to Waste



ASSISTED

29,778
New Neighbors
Using our Meal
Programs

Agency Spotlight: Putnam County Thrift Store/ Food Pantry



Putnam County Community Thrift Store (PCCTS) has been in operation for 47 years. Nancy, who has worked for PCCTS for over 30 years, shares “Our main project is, as it was in the beginning, providing those families in need living in Putnam County with food, clothing, toys, and household items.

The agency currently provides four programs supporting a variety of neighbors in need and people experiencing food insecurity. The agency provides food assistance, clothing, hygiene items, and recycling programs for clothes, jewelry, scrap metal, and books.

Nancy says the organization is currently experiencing an increase of new neighbors utilizing the programs overall and shares with the summer months starting, migrant workers and their families using the food pantry are expected to increase as well based on previous years’ experience.

There are various ways to support this agency. Support can be through financial donations (available to support via mail or in-person), or material items, food, clothing, and hygiene necessities to donate for the store and pantry to then distribute.

Putnam County Community Thrift Store:

Address: 101 W Main St., Ottawa, OH 45875

Hours: M-F 10 am-4:30 pm and Sat. 10 am-12:30 pm

Phone: 419-523-3032 **Online:** facebook.com/pccts

The Agency Provides:

Christmas for the Needy

Our main project is, as it was in the beginning, providing those families in need with food, clothing, toys, household items, etc., at Christmas time. We distribute toys to families through the Toys for Tots program organized by the Putnam Optimist.

Emergency Assistance Program

PCCTS assists at times of disaster & other circumstances. We assist on a case-by-case basis.

Choice Food Pantry

Profits from the retail store are used to purchase food for the Choice Food Pantry located in the back of the store. Families are given “points” based on the number of people in their household that they can use weekly in the Choice Food Pantry. Families must be residents of Putnam County to participate. The majority of the food is purchased through West Ohio Food Bank in Lima, Ohio and Kohl’s Market in Ottawa. We also receive (and greatly appreciate) donations from various local organizations.

Baby Needs

We offer diapers & educational resources for young moms.

Employee Spotlight: Jeremy Wittkamp

Jeremy has experience working as a Warehouse Associate/Driver at the food bank for over a year and was recently promoted to Warehouse Manager. Jeremy brought to the food bank over eight years of experience in customer relations, time management, process optimization, and accurate record-keeping skills.

Jeremy enjoys bowling on a league, watching football, playing video games, and spending time with his family.

As the Warehouse Manager, Jeremy’s goal is to coordinate the flow of the warehouse operations and is responsible for local, state, and federal reporting and ensuring all warehouse operations are in alignment with safety regulations.



“We can’t change the inevitable. But we can change how we respond. After all, life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react.” - Charles Swindoll

What is SNAP?

Formerly known as food stamps, SNAP stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, a federal government food-aid program that aids food-insecure individuals. Eligibility for the program is based on household income, and the benefit amount also considers the number of people relying upon that income. Those enrolled in SNAP receive a monthly stipend loaded onto a payment card — much like a credit card. This stipend can be used to buy food products from most food retailers.

New! SNAP Outreach

The SNAP Outreach Program sends West Ohio Food Bank's outreach coordinators to strategic community centers, faith-based organizations, and residential housing facilities to help eligible neighbors sign up for SNAP benefits.



Our outreach coordinators aim to make the process as easy as possible, helping individuals to complete applications, gather the necessary documentation, submit materials, and assist with recertification.

Success/Impact

Sharing neighbors' stories may help other people who are currently suffering or know someone experiencing food insecurity while battling serious health issues. Neighbors like Dana, 54, Hardin Co., share that he was forced to make tradeoffs between purchasing food and medication, among other household items needed, which is a common



challenge found across the people in Ohio who are facing hunger. He shares he is on SSI (Social Security Income), and has previously lived off the land by gardening, never asking for assistance until now.

Dana recently successfully completed a SNAP benefit application with a food bank staff member and shares, "I have a Stage 4 Cancer diagnosis I am currently fighting. I am on a fixed income with nothing left for food and other items I need throughout the month. I just recently began participating in the food bank's meals programs and getting food every month. They also helped me with signing up for the food benefits in which I was approved for \$275 per month. This will help me tremendously, and I won't have to worry about it so much. I have other issues to worry about." He shared how much he loved working in his garden.

Please visit our website or give us a call if you need help getting food and if you would like to support the food bank's meal programs. **Together we can continue helping our neighbors in need! Donate today!**



No Ohioan Should Go Hungry

(Continued from Page 1)

breaking point, facing overwhelming demand amid record inflation and high prices. We are calling on our state and federal leaders to make a firm, demonstrated commitment to ensure that no Ohioan goes hungry."

The pandemic is not yet over, and the future remains tenuous for people who have

experienced uncertain access to enough food for their families. It will likely take years for the food insecurity rates to return to pre-Covid status. Working to ensure no Ohioan goes hungry by supporting your food bank will continue providing access to healthy/nutritious meals and other grocery items required, for neighbors in need, to live healthy and active lives.