

# Food Bank is all about community collaboration

by Jennifer Bauman  
Food for Thought columnist

The news continues to be full of stories of people losing jobs, homes, and health care. You surely know some of these folks; perhaps your own household has been affected.

The situation is serious for many people these days, but if you must experience financial hardship, Lincoln isn't the worst place to be. It's never enough, of course, and some people fall through the cracks, but Lincoln has more places to turn for help than anywhere else in the FoodBank's 16-county service area.

Lincoln's human services organizations, challenged with providing resources in the face of growing need, increasingly are seeking solutions such as collaboration to help people with basic services. The Food Bank of Lincoln is a co-op of member agencies that distributes food to people who need it. Together we accomplish what no one agency could do alone.

Take, for example, the Neighborhood FOOD Program, a joint project of the Center for People in Need and the Food Bank. These mobile pantries at various sites around Lincoln distribute food and household goods to 1,200 families a week, with attendance on the



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rise. While neither organization might be able to stage such an operation on its own, collaboration makes it possible. The center lines up volunteers and the Food Bank contributes a big refrigerated truck. The Food Bank and CPIN share the cost of the products distributed and both send staff to the sites. Finally, the neighborhood host agencies such as Malone Community Center and Matt Talbot Kitchen & Outreach provide facilities and additional manpower as needed. It's truly a group effort. Another collaboration in

Lincoln involves the ongoing collection and distribution of perishables such as produce and bakery goods. Large amounts of perishables come to the Food Bank—donated, purchased, and salvaged—which are then redistributed to member agencies of the Food Bank co-op. Many days you will see the Food Bank's truck delivering items to the Good Neighbor Community Center, The Gathering Place, or the Indian Center. In turn, these agencies get this food into the hands of thousands

of people who can use it. Every Friday the Food Bank delivers large loads of perishables to the Salvation Army and the People's City Mission. In turn these agencies supplement what they distribute with items from their own shelves whenever possible. It's a massive effort: in 2008 the Mission's Distribution Center distributed over 142,000 pounds of perishables from the Food Bank to hungry clients. If you need food, there is a complete list of Lincoln pantry and meal sites at the Food Bank's Web site ([www.lincolinfoodbank.org](http://www.lincolinfoodbank.org)). If you don't have a computer, go to your nearest public library. Notice that there is not a day in Lincoln, Nebraska when you cannot find food distributions and/or a free meal. We are indeed fortunate in that respect. If you are interested in joining the food distribution effort either by donating or volunteering, just know that helping any feeding organization in Lincoln helps us all. We are all working toward the same goal of feeding hungry people in our community. And we all appreciate your participation. "Food for Thought" columns appear periodically in the Neighborhood Extra and are written by Jennifer Bauman, agency relations director for the Food bank of Lincoln.