

The Feeding Frontline

2020 SUMMER NEWSLETTER



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Hope When 'it Feels Like There's No End in Sight'

From a window in her apartment, barely a stone's throw from Lincoln High School, Dawn watched as cars, trucks and vans lined the street and curled around the block a quarter mile from their destination. It was a hot, humid Saturday morning in July, and vehicles inched toward tables where Food Bank staff were distributing mixed produce, dairy products, frozen meat and other goods.

"I've seen the lines on other days, but today is the first day I decided to walk over and get food for our family," she said.

Times are getting more and more challenging for Dawn and her husband. Both are employed and considered essential workers—she cleans office buildings and he works at a rehabilitation hospital.

"I went from cleaning six floors full of people to seeing maybe six people in the whole building," Dawn said.

Hard times are nothing new to their family, but this year is different. *"We've always been low-income. Always. We were doing okay until prices went up. We went from paying \$125 a week to \$220 a week in groceries."*

Although her three children are grown and living independently, Dawn and her husband share their tiny apartment with Dawn's mother who is disabled: "It's a struggle daily trying to make sure we have the right food because my mom is diabetic."

She said she has been struck by the toll the pandemic is taking on people who were getting by before the spread of COVID-19. "Usually it's low-income folks, but now you see all kinds of people going through (it)," Dawn said. "You know they weren't low income until this happened. I've been shocked because I see people who were middle class and even were maybe a little higher than middle class. Now, they're down here with me."

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THE FOOD BANK MISSION

Alleviate hunger
in Southeast Nebraska.

OUR VISION

Nourishing our communities
to end hunger.



A Letter From the Executive Director

“Hero” is a word that can be tossed around lightly, and it seems wise to use it sparingly. For years, I have talked with children in various settings and told them my heroes were my own children: Carson, Elizabeth and Joseph. These three interesting people have in their own unique ways inspired their “old man” time and time again. The point was that children, along with the rest of us, may, if we are lucky, have an opportunity to inspire.

The pandemic settled in on the Food Bank in mid-March. Here’s a list of colleagues who have inspired me since. Please read their names: Nancy Gritz, Penny Costello, Corrine Gernhart, Linda Pieper, Jami Gordon, Mariana Schell, Mary Arter, John Mabry, Jason Helgren, Kendall Pratt, Alynn Sampson, Kati Umberger, Derrick Martinez, Nicholas Harral, Katie Nungesser, Ana Martinez, Shelley Mann, Michaela Kumke, Doug Sams, Karen Hardesty, Patti Flynn, Gary Lockett, Ryan T. Meyer, Bruce Robertson, Pedro Hernandez, Justin Clarke, Gabriel De La Cruz, Arielle Eschbaugh, William Kieffe, Tommy Redd, Dan Shoemaker, Sylvie Bonilla, and Amanda Fahrer.

Since we divided our staff into three teams beginning in March, I have often said working at the Food Bank is really hard when it’s sunny and 72. It’s even harder now. Your Food Bankers have shown complete, faithful commitment to doing the challenging work our community needs done.

The pandemic has caused hardship throughout our community. Nearly everyone’s work and private lives are harder than usual. We believe we can handle it. Keep calm. Keep washing hands. Keep social distance. Keep our community’s leaders in our thoughts. Their decision-making gets harder with each passing week.

Let’s keep inspiring each other.

Thanks for helping us pursue our Mission; to Alleviate Hunger in Southeast Nebraska.

Best regards,

Scott Young
Executive Director
Food Bank of Lincoln

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Hope When ‘it Feels Like There’s No End in Sight’

Dawn is resourceful and resilient. They save money cooking outside on the grill. She expressed gratitude for the groceries which will cut down on her grocery bill and will allow her to pay more on her utilities. In turn, that means maybe she will worry just a little less this month about making rent.

“Please tell those folks [donors], thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. You have no idea how much this food today means to me and my family,” she said.

“I’ve fallen further and further behind. I can only imagine how stressful it is for people who don’t have jobs. It makes me sad. It makes me worried, especially when it feels like there’s no end in sight. If it gets any worse, I might end up being homeless. I don’t mind sleeping outdoors. That doesn’t bother me. But I don’t want to be homeless. Still, I hold on to hope. I just wish people would do what the medical experts are recommending so we can get through this.”



WHY WE GIVE: A Donor Story

"My wife and I decided to give \$1,200 of our stimulus money to the Food Bank of Lincoln because, quite honestly, we didn't ask for it and we can cover all of our expenses with salaries from stable jobs. If you are similarly situated, please consider joining us. All of the people who have lost employment, had hours cut or seen customers disappear don't have that ability and could really use our help. Given the Food Bank's buying power, it would be amazing to see even a modest number of people donate their stimulus money. I hope and believe that, when this is over, we will remember how people responded with creativity, generosity and community. Thanks for helping this amazing organization!"

- B. Johnson, donor

The Rewards of Reading and Community Collaboration



Teagan Earhart

Advocates involved with the Read Aloud Lincoln initiative wanted to help make lemonade out of the sour times so many families and children are facing related to the pandemic. They contacted the Food Bank to identify opportunities to engage with children and families as they waited in food lines at distributions. Their program goal is to spread the word to parents and caregivers that even 15 minutes of reading aloud from birth to age 8 can profoundly impact a child's success in school and in life.



Teagan Earhart, one of the initiative advocates shared the heartwarming update below.

"I can't say thank you enough for all your support and collaboration on getting books distributed at Food Bank sites," Earhart wrote. "We distributed 957 books across six sites."

One dad waiting in line told Earhart about his 5-year-old son. When she pulled a book about spiders out of her bag to offer, the dad replied, "Aw yeah, he's gonna love this!"

In another exchange, a grandmother could not contain her excitement. She had big family news — a new grandbaby who joined the family that very day!

A young woman, pregnant with her first child, was all smiles when she received a "First 100 Words" baby book.

"In a time when our contact with the community is at a depressing low, those moments have been buoying me the past few weeks. I so appreciate your help in making them happen," Earhart added.



The Food Bank proudly partners with organizations who help connect, inform and inspire the communities and neighbors we serve. **To learn more about partnership opportunities, please contact Michaella Kumke, community engagement director, at mkumke@lincolnfoodbank.org.**

When the School Year Looks Different, So Does Feeding School-Age Children

The Food Bank staff is working hard on devising workable strategies for feeding kids this school year. We expect to have a combination of Backpack Programs and School Market operations across our 16-county service area. Feeding America, our network of food banks, anticipates a 24–26% increase in food insecurity for kids under the age of 18 in the state of Nebraska. We are working diligently in conjunction with our school partners and partner agencies to get food to our kids and their families. Even if students don't convene in school classrooms, teachers remain committed to educating. We believe in those efforts, and we remain committed to alleviating hunger to help fuel that learning.



Bryan Health Partnership Addresses Patients' Hunger

Last fall, the staff at Bryan Medical Center launched a program called Hope Against Hunger which provides food insecure patients with a backpack of food upon discharge. A small team of experts sought input from Food Bank staff as they developed the program and implemented screening questions. Food Bank volunteers assisted in the bag-packing effort, a duty Bryan staff now fulfill as the pandemic affects volunteer involvement across the city and country.

Since the program's launch in September 2019, it has served 358 patients. Food Bank Executive Director and Bryan Medical Center Board of Trustees Chair Scott Young said, "It is a great deal for Bryan, a great partnership for the Food Bank, and a great service to the 358 discharged patients."

The largest number of discharged patients who report a food insecurity issue come from Bryan West, followed by Bryan West Mental Health and Bryan East. Employees have embraced the program, which has gained exceptional internal interest and support.



HOURS
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Monday through Friday

LOCATION
4840 Doris Bair Circle, Suite A
(next to Doris Bair softball complex)

MAILING ADDRESS
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