



# State College Area Food Bank News

276 West Hamilton Avenue, State College, PA 16801 • (814) 234-2310

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<http://foodbank.centreconnect.org>

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## Executive Director's Report

By Linda Tataliba

The holiday season is the busiest time of the year for us here at the Food Bank. We think of the 220 plus households, including more than 600 individuals we serve monthly, many of whom hold down two minimum-wage jobs and many are single parents. We think about the seniors on fixed incomes, who often must choose between basic food needs and prescription medicines. Most of all, we think about those children who lack basic nutritious food, let alone the special holiday foods every child should have each holiday. We can make a difference—and we do, thanks to caring donors, volunteers, and community partners.

For more than 35 years, the Elks Club has provided holiday food baskets for needy families through their Christmas Charity Program. Their members help us distribute the baskets, filled with holiday meal trimmings, a turkey, and “real potatoes” provided by the Marine Corps Toys for Tots Program. In 2008 we served 758 children through this distribution. Additionally, in collaboration with the Centre County

Adult Services and a team of volunteers, over 400 extra households were served through our “un-registered” Toys for Tots program



*A local grower of produce and volunteer to the Food Bank makes a huge difference! See inside for full story.*

distribution site for the working poor, the majority of whom do not access their local food banks. During November, we distribute a free turkey and an extra bag of holiday foods for Thanksgiving with every food order we give out. The Penn State Office of Student Affairs and the Into the Streets Program packed and donated festive baskets filled with Thanksgiving holiday foods for our needy families, and at least 150 families received roasting chickens and/or turkey breasts made possible through a donation from local residents Anita and Lee Morris and through our federal Temporary Emergency Assistance Program (TEFAP).

The generosity of our donors—including the 60,000 to 75,000 pounds of donated food items collected by the Boys Scouts, the Letter Carriers group, and the Penn State annual Trash to Treasures volunteers—allows us to assist those in need all year long. Donations tend to rise at this time of year, making possible not only our basic services, but also our holiday “extras.” Many individuals, groups, and organizations support us financially or conduct food drives or special events to raise money for us during the holidays and throughout the year. Our mission is to provide emergency food to those in need in the State College area and to support the network of food pantries in Centre County. Without the safety net of a caring community, many among us would face losing a great deal. We are thankful to be able to hold up a part of that safety net and are thankful for all of you who join us in doing so.

At this special time, we extend our thanks to our supporters as we wish one and all a joyous holiday season and a very healthy and happy new year. ■

**Call to Volunteer!**

**(814) 234-2310**

### “Food Insecurity” Experienced by Many

According to a recent article in the Washington Post, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that “nearly 50 million people—including almost one child in four—struggled last year to get enough to eat.” The report goes on to say that dependable access to adequate food has especially declined among families with children. Nearly 17 million children lived in households in which food was scarce at times: That’s four million children more than the year before.

Women raising children alone face severe food shortages. Last year,

more than one in three single mothers reported that they struggled for food, and more than one in seven said that someone in their home had been hungry.

In the survey used to measure food shortages, people answered questions such as whether, in the past year, their food sometimes ran out before they had money to buy more, whether they could not afford to eat nutritionally balanced meals, and whether adults in the family sometimes ate smaller meals or skipped meals because they lacked money for food. The report defined

the degree of Americans’ “food insecurity” by the number of the questions to which they answered yes.

Close to home, the Centre County Commissioners proclaimed the week of November 9 through 13 National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness week. Our Food Bank was recognized in this proclamation because of our generous sharing of food, cash, and grocery gift cards from various community food drives and campaigns. Thanks for doing your part to alleviate food insecurity and hunger in our community. ■

### How to Give By Linda Tataliba

Your donations are always appreciated! Grocery store gift cards in any amount are always welcome. We use gift cards to maintain our food inventory and supplement what we don’t receive in food donations.

“Informed” donations are especially valuable to us. Here are some suggestions from our needs list on the Web:

- Tomato products (stewed tomatoes, diced tomatoes, tomato sauce, etc.)
- Baking mixes (Bisquick, Jiffy, pancake) and muffin mixes
- Soup and cream soup (mushroom, chicken, celery, etc.)
- Dried fruit (cranberry, apricot, prune, etc.)
- Laundry and dish detergent
- Bars of soap
- Birthday bags – A decorated paper bag that contains a cake mix, frosting and candles. You can even add party favors! This is a good activity for youth groups that can’t come in to volunteer but would like to help the community.



*Food Bank volunteers Mary Jane Brune and Sandy Lieb admire the beautiful produce provided by many generous supporters.*

**F**eeding America is the new name for the former Second Harvest program. Visit our Food Bank Web site at <http://foodbank.centreconnect.org> to learn more about Feeding America, the nation's leading domestic hunger-relief charity. Feeding America's mission is "to feed America's hungry through a nationwide network of member food banks and engage our country in the fight to end hunger." Each year, the network helps more than 25 million low-income people facing hunger in the United States, including 9 million children and nearly 3 million seniors.

Encompassing more than 200 food banks in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, Feeding America distributes more than 2 billion pounds of donated food and grocery products each year.

On the Food Bank Web site, click on the "Contributors" link to the left, then on the "Feeding America" link. Read true-life stories about Americans facing hunger, learn about food insecurity and hunger across the nation, and find out how you can help. ■

We are now able to accept financial donations online through **CLICK&PLEDGE**. It's easy and it's located on our home page!

## Helping Neighbors

### "We Would Not Have Survived ..."

**I**n his book *The Working Poor*, David Shipler asserts that many children in poverty never have a fresh fruit or vegetable. Fresh fruits and vegetables are vital for a healthy diet, but they



*Joan Zimmer working with youth volunteers to plant a Food Bank garden.*

are also expensive, so access to fresh produce is difficult or impossible for those in poverty.

But thanks to many groups and generous growers in our community, our Food Bank can offer fresh produce to our clients and their children.

This past summer, Penn State's High Tunnel Farm delivered a variety of vegetables and the Downtown Rotary Club gathered donations from the Downtown Farmers' Market. During the peak season we received over 800 pounds of produce a week from these sources. One local grower, Bill Zimmer, together with his family planted, tended, and harvested a Food Bank garden. Bill also organized other gardeners to grow produce for the Food Bank.

Our clients were appreciative. One mother referred to the prohibitive cost of fresh foods: "Thank you for the fresh fruit and veggies. They are so important but are always the last food I can afford." Another

mother of two small children says, "We would not have survived the past few years if it were not for the kindness of people like you. Providing food that you grew from God's earth is such a blessing." ■



*Bill Zimmer, a local grower and volunteer, worked with his family to harvest a Food Bank garden. He and his wife organized others to grow a garden as well.*

# Thank You

## Let's Do the Numbers

We have seen a 70 percent increase in frequency of client visits to the Food Bank this year, as well as an overall 10 to 15 percent increase in the number of households we serve countywide. Many of our new clients have never had to use a food bank before. But thanks to our generous community, we are meeting demands.

Thanks so much to all community members and organizations for your generous contributions. Let's do the numbers for October 2009:

- 1,307 – Number of grocery bags distributed
- 629 – Number of people the Food Bank served in 221 households (218 children)
- 18 – Number of families who used the Food Bank more than once

- 34,576 – Number of pounds of perishable and non-perishable items donated, including 25,000 pounds from the Scouting for Food Drive
- 675 – Number of volunteer hours, including 100 hours of sorting and stocking food items and moving to a new storage area at our Nittany Mall site

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