School Pantries Help Students Succeed

Providing children and young adults with access to healthy, nutritious food is a priority for the Rhode Island Community Food Bank. Young people are among the most vulnerable members of our community as their success and development depend on eating well.

Over the past year, the Food Bank has worked with both elementary and secondary schools to open ten school-based pantries to address the needs of young people seeking food assistance. Currently, they serve hundreds of students each month with food they can eat at school or use in preparing a meal at home.

School Pantries in the Community

By situating pantries right on the school grounds, low-income families gain convenient access to food assistance. Pantries are located throughout the state at a wide range of schools in economically challenged communities.

“These kids would go hungry without the pantry.”

Each school takes a different approach to serving students depending on the needs of the community. In some sites, students are referred to the pantry program by teachers or counselors while in others any student may access these resources as often as they like. At the elementary schools, pantries are open to parents while children may also take food home in backpacks.

The majority of food in the pantries comes from the Rhode Island Community Food Bank and students often help maintain the space, stocking the shelves and keeping it neat and clean as well as tracking what is received and distributed.

Access For Everyone

Brittany is a student at the Providence Transition Academy, a program of Education in Action. Here she is preparing for life in the real world after graduating high school, including learning how to budget and shop for food as well as cook and prepare healthy meals. Brittany is one of many students who regularly take advantage of the school pantry.

Like many families, Brittany and her parents are struggling in this economy and, as a young adult, she is expected to pitch in. As she explains, “The pantry can help me get food without having to go too far and without having to spend anything.”

She speaks for all of her classmates when she says, “It’s very helpful. When students don’t have money, they can just go in the pantry and get food. They can grab what they need to make dinner.”

Tribbie Zarra, who counsels and serves as an advocate for her students, said that, before the school pantry arrived, “Sometimes these kids just wouldn’t eat . . . it was horrible.” She works closely with the Food Bank to choose

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Brittany in the Education in Action pantry where she is able to access food for her family.

the best food for her students and shares recipes that are favorites yet affordable, nutritious and easy to make.

Focus on Learning Not Hunger

As we know, learning is even more difficult when students are malnourished. It’s challenging to concentrate and get work done when you’re hungry. And with a pantry located right in the school, students can focus on learning rather than worrying where they’ll get their next meal.

At first, Providence Transition Academy students were shy when it came to using the pantry. But they soon realized that it was there to help them and there was no need to be embarrassed. Some students take advantage of the pantry every day while others use it only on occasion. And many of the students take food home to share with the rest of their family.

As Tribbie explained, “The kids appreciate the help so much. Even if they don’t know how to express it.”

At all of the school-based pantry sites, staff and teachers, along with the Food Bank, have provided a critical resource for children and families. Instead of worrying about hunger, students can focus on what’s important: learning and succeeding.

Improving Economy Ignores Low-Wage Workers

The 2015 Status Report on Hunger in Rhode Island reveals that, despite improvements in the local economy, one in eight households still struggles to make ends meet. Although unemployment has decreased over the past several years, workers remain underemployed and earning less while their overall expenses continue to increase, leaving them without enough money to make ends meet.

Often there are difficult choices to be made between food and other necessities like rent, utilities, and health care. As a result, workers turn to local food pantries and the Food Bank to help fill the gap while they also rely on government programs and community-based organizations for support.

Even these safeguards are not enough for some of the most vulnerable populations, children and seniors, who make up half of the clients served by the Food Bank. It is critically important that both groups have access to healthy, nutritious food to prevent the consequences of diminished health and productivity.

To view the entire Status Report and learn about some of the solutions to addressing hunger among children and seniors, visit www.rifoodbank.org/StatusReport2015.
SAVE THE DATES

Canstruction 2016
March 12 through March 26 • Providence Place
The design and construction industry once again supports the Rhode Island Community Food Bank. See sculptures designed by six leading architectural firms made entirely out of canned food which will be donated back to the Food Bank.

Truck Stop: A Festival of Street Eats
Friday, April 29, 5:30 to 8:30 pm • ALEX AND ANI City Center
The Food Bank and Eat Drink RI take over the downtown skating rink for Truck Stop: A Festival of Street Eats. Guests will sample from 15 of Rhode Island's finest food trucks and enjoy great local music. Tickets are $75 and will be on sale in March.

Empty Bowls
Friday, September 23, 2016 • 5:30 to 8:30 pm
Rhodes on the Pawtuxet in Cranston
For the second year, the Food Bank will be hosting this amazing fundraiser. Enjoy local pottery and food at this casual, family-friendly event. Choose a handmade artisanal bowl. Taste samples of soup, bread and dessert from local restaurants. Keep your bowl as a reminder that your support helps fill all the empty bowls in our community.

Visit the Food Bank website and sign up for our eNews to receive updates on these and other great events.

Food Bank Welcomes New Board Members

At the 2015 Annual Meeting last October, the following individuals were elected as members of the Board of Directors:

Harley Frank of Providence has served as president of family-owned Admiral Packaging for the past 18 years. He is a graduate of the University of Vermont and spent 13 years on the board of the Jewish Community Center of Rhode Island.

Mark Freel of Barrington is a partner in the Litigation Department of Locke Lord LLP. He has served 27 years as a business and commercial litigator in the Providence and Boston areas. He has a BA in English and Journalism from the University of New Hampshire and his JD was earned at the University of Connecticut School of Law.

Cheryl Johnson of Saunderstown serves as executive vice president of human resources at Textron Inc. For more than 15 years, she has held various human resource leadership positions across Textron's businesses. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Operations Management and an MBA from Northern Illinois University.

Russell Partridge of Wakefield is executive director of the WARM Center, a comprehensive social service agency in Westerly Rhode Island. The WARM Center provides food, shelter and clothing to those in need in Washington County. Russ has been the director of WARM for 4 years. His social service career spans more than 30 years working throughout Rhode Island.

STAMP OUT HUNGER • MAY 14

Each year, on the second Saturday in May, letter carriers across the country collect food donations for their local food banks as part of Stamp Out Hunger.

Once again, the Food Bank is partnering with the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) in asking you to leave a bag of non-perishable food at your mailbox on Saturday, May 14. Your donation will be collected and delivered to us through the generous efforts of our letter carriers.

Last year’s drive collected more than 97,000 pounds of food for Rhode Islanders in need of assistance.

Stamp Out Hunger is a collaborative effort of the NALC, the United Way of Rhode Island, AFL-CIO Community Services, and the United States Postal Service.
RI Kids’ Healthy Recipe Challenge
Winning Recipes Available in Free Cookbook

The Rhode Island Community Food Bank joined with Governor Gina Raimondo, First Gentleman Andy Moffit and Eat Drink RI to host the first annual Rhode Island Kids’ Healthy Recipe Challenge culminating with a luncheon featuring the winning recipes:

- **Appetizer:** Tabouli by Chef Sofia Sweet
- **Entrée:** Cod Fish Tacos by Chef Cameron Belisle
- **Dessert:** Apple Heart by Chef Lily Addonizio

The Community Kitchen at the Food Bank prepared and served the winning dishes to finalists and their families, along with local elected officials and community members. The Governor’s Office received 126 recipes for starters, entrées and desserts from students in grades 5 through 8 throughout Rhode Island and chose six to seven finalists for each category. To try these recipes at home, visit: [www.rifoodbank.org/recipechallenge](http://www.rifoodbank.org/recipechallenge).

Community Cooking
Wholesome Eating on a Budget

The Food Bank’s Community Cooking program teaches food pantry clients how to make healthy, practical meals on a tight budget. Classes combine hands-on cooking with nutritional education emphasizing diets incorporating vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins. To give you a taste of what clients are learning, we’re including one of their favorite recent recipes.

**Veggie Bean Chili**
Recipe adapted from [www.theglowingfridge.com](http://www.theglowingfridge.com).
Serves 5. Approximate cost of the recipe $5.62, per serving $1.12

- 1/3 cup low sodium vegetable broth
- 1 onion, diced
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 bell pepper, any color, diced
- 1 zucchini, diced
- 2 (15 oz) cans of black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (28 oz) can of diced tomatoes
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup cooked quinoa (or brown rice)
- 1.5 tbsp. chili powder
- 2 tsp. cumin
- 1/3 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 Avocado, 1 lime and 1 bunch of cilantro (optional)

**Directions**
- In a large pot, heat veggie broth on medium-high heat and sauté onion and garlic, for about 3 minutes.
- Add bell pepper and zucchini. Sauté for about 3–4 minutes or until soft. Add in black beans, tomatoes, water, quinoa and the spices.
- Bring to a boil and then reduce heat to simmer for 10 minutes.
- Top with avocado, fresh lime juice, cilantro (optional).

IRA Charitable Rollover Gifts Extended
Use Your Traditional IRA to Make Your Charitable Gifts in 2016

At the end of 2015, Congress permanently extended the IRA Charitable Rollover as a giving opportunity. Many people have not heard about this option for making charitable gifts because it would expire every year and need to be renewed by Congress. **The IRA Charitable Rollover allows individuals age 70½ and older to make direct transfers totaling up to $100,000 per year to 501(c)(3) charities, without having to count the transfers as income for federal income tax purposes.**

As you plan your minimum required distributions for this year, if you do not need the money the government is requiring you to take, consider using it for a charitable gift to the Food Bank using the IRA Charitable Rollover. This provides you with an excellent opportunity to make gifts during your lifetime from an asset that would be subject to multiple levels of taxation if it remained in your taxable estate.

Visit [www.rifoodbank.org/planned giving](http://www.rifoodbank.org/planned giving) for more details.