Food Pantries Fill the Gaps During the Summer Months

When school is out, families like Deanne’s are forced to find ways to supplement the meals their children normally receive through the federal free and reduced-price lunch program. Fortunately, Deanne has the Jonnycake Center in Peace Dale.

Deanne first reached out to Jonnycake, a member agency of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank, when she moved into a housing development in South County last Fall. She had been homeless for some time and needed furniture and other basic necessities to get started.

And, of course, she needed food for her three growing children: Nick, 16; Jordan, 7; and Gabby, 6.

“They [Jonnycake] give me a lot. Milk is a big thing in my house. We can never have enough. And peanut butter. The kids love it.”

No School, No Lunch

In Rhode Island, 54,000 children receive free and reduced-price lunches during the school year while 28,000 receive school breakfast. These federal nutrition programs play an important role in protecting children from hunger and in the last ten years, the number of participants in the state has increased. But when school is out, parents struggle to fill in the gap.

“My kids like to eat healthy. We recently got peanut butter and jelly, cereal, broccoli, fruit and string beans. All good stuff.”

Relying on SNAP (the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and some assistance from the children’s father, Deanne does not have enough money every month to provide food for her family.

“We go through food so quickly, especially in the summer. I don’t know what I’d do without Jonnycake.”

Deanne takes advantage of the pantry each month receiving a healthy food basket that contains enough food to prepare three meals a day for a week for the entire household.

“They help me with snacks, too, so I don’t have to look embarrassed sending my kids places without them.”

Some Extra Help

Recently, Deanne and her family had a setback when she broke her foot in a car accident. The sole driver in the family, she has struggled with getting to the pantry and bringing the kids back and forth to school.

“We moved into our new home and the kids had adjusted to school. Things were settling down and I was just starting to look for a job. Then the accident happened. Now I’m stuck here most of the time.”

Even when everything is going well, one unexpected turn of events can cause setbacks. It can happen to anyone but the impact is even more profound when you’re already struggling to make ends meet.

Fortunately, folks at the Jonnycake Center were able to provide extra support by delivering food right to Deanne’s home.
Rhode Island Children Rely on School Meals

Federal nutrition programs play an important role in protecting children from hunger. Over the last ten years, participation in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs increased in Rhode Island.

In 2007, 40 percent of children enrolled in free or reduced-price lunch also received school breakfast. Ten years later, breakfast participation grew to 51 percent, reflecting successful efforts by schools to reduce stigma and barriers, including offering breakfast in the classroom and universal breakfast (free to all students).

Older Americans Month

Twenty percent of the guests served by member agencies of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank are over the age of sixty. To recognize some of the unique needs of this population, Food Bank staff hosted a number of events during the month of May, recognized annually as Older Americans Month.

Each month, the Food Bank distributes approximately 1,500 boxes of supplemental food from the USDA to eligible seniors throughout the state. These boxes contain shelf-stable supplies that seniors can use in addition to the food they may purchase in the market or pick up at a pantry.

In Providence, in addition to food boxes, staff distributed gift bags and our Senior Resource Guide to seniors at the West End Community Center thanks to funding from the City of Providence. Guests were excited to get a little something extra along with their monthly food box.

The East Bay Food Pantry in Bristol held a Senior Celebration on food box distribution day. Guests were treated to refreshments and giveaways while participating in short workshops on fitness, fall prevention and diabetes and heart disease prevention. The outdoor fresh produce market was also open so seniors could take a selection of fruits and vegetables home with them.

The Food Bank also held a training for member agency staff and volunteers on the best way to serve senior guests. Topics included helping seniors with restricted diets shop at food pantries and a session on mindfulness and self-care.

Summer Food Drive

During the summer, the Food Bank sees a reduction in the amount of food donated, yet member agencies continue to serve 57,000 guests each month. Children are out of school and no longer receive free and reduced-price lunches forcing parents to find other ways to feed their families, often turning to their local food pantry.

To help raise awareness and donations, the Food Bank launched a Summer Food Drive beginning on June 26 and running through August 31.

You can join by collecting food at your organization or business. The Food Bank can provide you with boxes, barrels or posters. Check out the resources available at rifoodbank.org/fooddrives.
GRADUATING WITH PURPOSE:  
A Community Kitchen Success Story

It was only two years ago that Yoshie Kawakami and her husband moved to America from Mexico for a better life. In Mexico, Yoshie had been a dentist for over a decade. She was also a teacher of dentistry. But her credentials weren’t accepted in the United States. “I had been working for 14 years, so it was stressful when my husband got a job and I couldn’t,” she says.

She had already felt like she was burning out as a dentist, and took the opportunity to start searching for a restaurant job or a cooking class to begin a new career based on her love of cooking. She found the Community Kitchen advertisement on Craigslist – that it was free was a good draw. As she researched it, she read alumni Nick DeCamp’s story about burning out as a teacher and starting a new career in cooking. She saw a lot of parallels in her own situation, so she decided to give it a chance.

“I was hoping for training and credentials,” says Yoshie. “It was life changing. It wasn’t just training, I gained confidence, professionalism, it was even a chance to practice my English, so it’s been free language classes as well!” But she’s learned more than even just that. “After we took classes about finding a job, I realized how many gaps I had in my education about getting hired. Having that kind of knowledge... it’s gold. The first thing you’ve got to know about every person that comes here is they want to get a job, to support their families or themselves.”

Her classmates have had a big impact on her. “Everyone is a role model to each other. We all have to make sacrifices. Understanding that is another lesson, it teaches you to be respectful and patient.” She describes her teachers as role models as well. “I have no words. They’ve been the greatest teachers I’ve had in my life, and I’ve had a lot. They are incredible professionals and human beings. I will always be grateful to them because they changed my life.”

And for Yoshie, the former dentist in Mexico, there’s been a lot of change.

“The thing that changed the most was my sense of my life’s purpose. The work at the Food Bank is inspirational, they challenge the cycle of poverty here. And I want to continue with that. I’ve been hired as a baker and a teacher for adults with mental and physical disabilities. My purpose now is to give back to the community of this country. It’s time to pay it back and pay it forward for all we’ve received.”

Truck Stop

Thirty-three mobile vendors provided delicious food to more than 600 attendees for our sixth annual Truck Stop event held as part of the Eat Drink RI Festival.

The rain cleared in the nick of time and everyone enjoyed a beautiful evening. Guests and sponsors raised over $150,000 for our neighbors in need! Thanks to Street Eats Festival Sponsor Stop & Shop for their generous support.
Community Kitchen Celebrates 20 Years

Transforming lives through culinary education

For 20 years, the Community Kitchen culinary job training program at the Rhode Island Community Food Bank has prepared low-income adults for careers in the food industry. More than 600 students have graduated from the program and moved on to a wide range of opportunities in every field.

Community Kitchen was started to offer adults a hand up, rather than a hand out. It was a way to lift them out of poverty, while also developing a skilled workforce for the food industry.

As Andrew Schiff, CEO of the RI Community Food Bank explains: “For a moment, put yourself in their shoes. Imagine you are unemployed with few job prospects. There's little money left to pay the bills. You need to start over, to begin again. You put your trust in the Food Bank and the Community Kitchen program. That's not an easy step to take, but it can change your life.”

Jacques Pépin Foundation Collaboration

During the past year, the Jacques Pépin Foundation and the Community Kitchen program at the Rhode Island Community Food Bank have come together over a shared mission to educate and prepare the next generation of chefs for careers in the culinary field. Training programs also help lift participants out of poverty so they can support themselves and their families over the long-term.

Rollie Wesen, co-founder & chief operations officer of the Jacques Pépin Foundation, explains how this collaboration formed after he visited Community Kitchen and saw our students and their teachers in action:

“I was so moved by the incredible work that Chef Heather and Chef Ron were doing. It was so exciting to see these students that were really at the edge of hope find their confidence and a pathway back into the workforce.”

Savor Event Raises $195,000 For Culinary Job Training

Program supports students working toward careers in the food industry.

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Savor: An Evening with Jacques Pépin

To launch this collaboration, the Food Bank hosted an event with Jacques Pépin at Newport Vineyards in Middletown on Thursday, June 7. A spectacular evening with Jacques Pépin and special guest Sara Moulton, the fundraiser featured world-class wine pairings and a multi-course feast with plates prepared by:

- Matthew McCartney from Jamestown FISH
- Rick Moonen from RM Seafood at Mandalay Bay

About Community Kitchen

Community Kitchen is a full-time 14-week program that prepares participants for entry-level jobs in the restaurant and food service industry. Students are trained in basic cooking skills as well as various aspects of food service operations, kitchen safety and first aid. Beginning in the 7th week of the program, participants are assigned an on-the-job training site where they spend time every Monday gaining practical experience in a local business.

Students also learn professional and life skills like interviewing, resume writing and conflict resolution. While practicing their skills in the Food Bank’s industrial kitchen, students are preparing meals that are served to children at afterschool programs in low-income communities.

Community Cooking is about much more than cooking skills. As graduate Johan Jansen explains, “They showed the confidence in me that I didn’t have in myself at that point and that has made such a difference in my life.”

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Program supports students working toward careers in the food industry.
Celebrating Community Kitchen

On Monday, May 14, the RI Community Food Bank hosted a special alumni event to celebrate twenty years of Community Kitchen. Alumni, staff, volunteers and friends of the Food Bank came together at Skyline at Waterplace in Providence to recognize this outstanding achievement.

Chef Heather Langlois was honored for two decades of dedication and commitment to the program.

As she explains, “It’s just been so inspirational to witness what takes place in 14 weeks.”

Since Community Kitchen started in 1998:

- More than 600 students have graduated
- A total of sixty-six 14-week classes have been held
- 80% of graduated students are employed within one year of completing the program
- Many generous donors have supported the program.

Graduates have accomplished many amazing feats from working in award-winning restaurants to starting their own businesses. And they continue to support each other through a network of caring, nurturing alumni.

Other celebrity chefs in attendance included Rick Bayless, Michel Nisan, Claudine Pépin and Rollie Wesen. Live music was performed by the Pat McGee Band.

Guests were treated to a live auction with prizes including dinner with Jacques Pépin, a “Best Cuisine at Sea” cruise and a day on the set of “Simply Ming” with Ming Tsai.

Community Kitchen graduate Khadijah Muhammad-Kebe spoke about the impact of the program on her life. Before she enrolled she had been divorced, laid off from her banking job and she was losing her home to foreclosure. Then she was accepted into Community Kitchen.

“This became my first step in a direction that would eventually change my life. I learned not only how to work in the kitchen but life skills that helped me love and value myself in ways that I never could have imagined.”

Since graduation, Khadijah has earned her Culinary Arts degree and is working on her Masters. She works as a culinary education teacher in a public school system in Texas. She has come full circle.

The event raised $195,000 to support Community Kitchen and other culinary job training programs that transform the lives of students like Khadijah. The successful evening was made possible thanks to the generous sponsorship of:

- Oceania Cruises
- Atria Senior Living
- Butchertown Grocery
- U.S. Trust
- Bank of America
- Collette
Help Families in Need Every Month

The Food Bank provides assistance to families all year long, not just during the holiday season. Our Sustainers Harvest monthly giving program is a simple way for you to help alleviate hunger all year-round. You can designate an amount that will be automatically charged to your credit card or deducted from your checking account every month until you notify us to stop. Every January we’ll send you a full report of all your gifts from the previous year. Even a small monthly amount can help to feed many people. A gift of $10 will acquire 30 pounds of healthy food. Over the course of a year, that equals 360 pounds of food! You can learn more and sign-up online at rifoodbank.org/sustainer.

Save the Date

Scouting for Food
Saturday, November 3, At your door by 8 am

On Saturday, November 4, you can support the Food Bank through the 31st annual Scouting for Food Drive. During the last weekend of October, your local Scout volunteers will leave a hanger on your door and return the following Saturday to pick up your donation of non-perishable food for the Food Bank. Last year, the Narragansett Council, Scouts of America collected more than 200,000 pounds of food so please help them make this year’s drive a success.

Holiday Food Drive & Open House
Saturday, December 8, 9 am to noon
Rhode Island Community Food Bank
200 Niantic Ave, Providence

Join us for our annual Holiday Open House at the Rhode Island Community Food Bank. Stop in for some holiday cheer while delivering your food donation to help out this holiday season. Take a tour of the Food Bank, meet the staff and enjoy live music and other fun activities.

Empty Bowls
Thursday, October 18 from 5:30 to 8 pm
Rhodes on the Pawtuxet, Cranston

Mark your calendars! We’ll be holding Empty Bowls, presented by Citizens Bank, on Thursday, October 18 (take note of the new day)! Enjoy samplings from the best of Rhode Island’s restaurants and food service industry! Each attendee also gets to take home their own handcrafted bowl to remind them of the empty bowls they helped to fill in the community.
Agency Services Conference:
Working Together to End Hunger

Each year, the Food Bank’s Agency Services team hosts an annual conference to bring together volunteers and staff from our member agencies to share best practices and honor outstanding work. Please take a look at this year’s award winners.

Best Practice Award Winners
These agencies received special recognition for their outstanding and innovative efforts to better serve their guests.

- Bread of Life Food Pantry, Rumford
- Church of the Master Meal Site, Providence
- East Bay Food Pantry, Riverside
- Jonnycake Center of Peace Dale
- Federal Hill House Pantries, Providence
- Martin Luther King Center, Newport
- North Kingstown Food Pantry
- RICAN, Westerly
- Saint Philip Food Pantry, Greenville

Sister Carol McGovern Award Winner
The Sister Carol McGovern Award is given to honor someone for their work on the front lines to alleviate hunger and poverty at a Food Bank member agency.

This year's award was presented to Priscilla Feeney with the North Kingstown Food Pantry.

Priscilla volunteers as the food buyer for the pantry, ordering food to support 1,300 individuals and families. She takes inventory of what's in stock and orders supplies from the Food Bank and other sources.

About the Sister Carol McGovern Award
Sister Carol McGovern was Co-Director of Amos House from 1983-1995 and she was a founding board member of the Food Bank from 1983-1990. The award is a tribute to her lifetime of work assisting others.

This award is presented to an individual representing a member agency that works on the front lines – alleviating and preventing hunger, enabling individual self-sufficiency and empowering the communities in which they work. The individual is honored for exemplifying Sister Carol's ideals and providing outstanding community service.
Summer Fruit Bruschetta

Our nutrition education team is always looking for new ideas to make fresh, healthy meals on a budget. Check out this easy, quick and versatile recipe for your next gathering. It looks elegant, takes minimum prep and has a fresh summer taste!

Ingredients:
- 8oz Brie (or other) cheese
- 1 ripe peach, sliced
- 1 ripe plum, sliced
- 1 French baguette or any crusty bread
- Extra virgin olive oil
- A few sprigs of fresh thyme
- A few drizzles of honey

Directions:
1. Slice the bread and drizzle with olive oil. Under a broiler, toast the bread until lightly golden brown. Placing the bread on the grill will also give it a nice charred taste.
2. Once the bread has cooled slightly, spread a layer of Brie cheese on the toast.
3. Add one slice of the peach or plum.
4. Lastly, top with a sprinkle of fresh thyme leaves and a drizzle of honey.

Note:
You can use any fresh ripe fruit, including strawberries, pears, pineapple, mango, etc. Stone fruits, like peaches and plums, grill nicely and caramelize just a little for an added sweetness!