School-Based Pantry Helps Families In Need

The moms who volunteer at the food pantry at Segue Institute for Learning in Central Falls know what it means to need assistance. For all of them, the pantry provides a lifeline long after their children attend the school.

Many of them still use the pantry to help their families. More importantly, they work to make sure other parents and students always have access to the healthy, nutritious food they need.

Blanca, a parent/volunteer explains, “For me, I know for a fact that it makes a huge difference. I’m not working and my husband doesn’t earn much. The pantry is a big help. I can’t even think about what we would do if we didn’t have it.”

The pantry serves the entire community at Segue, an independent charter school in Central Falls, one of the most economically challenged areas in Rhode Island. Here, everyone is welcome. Students may come to grab a snack during the day or parents and neighbors may stock up on essentials they need to prepare meals at home.

"Families should not have to decide between paying rent and buying food for their children."

Nadya works at the school, as the Parent Engagement Coordinator. She first became involved when her daughter attended the school, using the pantry and other resources. Now that her daughter has graduated, Nadya remains at the school helping other families.

As she told us, “Many families in our community struggle to make ends meet. To put food on the table. The pantry helps give them the little extra that really makes a difference.”

As a member agency of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank, the pantry at Segue provides many essentials for families, not just canned goods. Healthy, nutritious foods like rice, pasta, chicken, fresh vegetables, potatoes and carrots are readily available, which is important for growing young bodies and minds.

Yet, there is still a great need. As Nadya explains, “This year we have seen an increase in people who are visiting our food pantry.”

Although the economy is improving in Rhode Island thanks to job growth, many low-income families still struggle due to the increasing cost of food, rent and other utilities.

“For families that are struggling, it is rewarding for them to come here and know that they can put food on the table,” says Nadya, adding, “We’re always busiest toward the end of the month when people receiving assistance [SNAP] start running out and need more help.”

“Families should not have to decide between paying rent and buying food for their children,” says Delia, one of the many parent/volunteers making a difference at Segue.
Giving His Home to Help Others

Harris Pitnof began his career as a radio operator at a station in Chatham. Despite the odds, he wanted to become a professional pilot and put himself through flight training, eventually working at American Airlines for 29 years.

After his parents passed away, Harris was struck by the challenges involved in executing their estates. Not having children of his own, he recognized the difficulty that selling a house would present for his sister and family upon his death and he didn’t want it to become a burden.

He also thought of the need faced by so many in Rhode Island. “I’ve been very, very fortunate,” he says. “As I’ve gotten older, it occurred to me that there are a lot of people who don’t have the good fortune that I do.”

Working with his lawyer, Harris established a revocable living trust which included the house. The Food Bank was made the beneficiary of the trust so when Harris passes away, ownership of the house is immediately transferred. Then it becomes the Food Bank’s responsibility to sell the house, benefiting from all of the proceeds.

Harris certainly has many more years to spend in his home but he can rest easy knowing that he leaves a legacy that will support others.

Food Bank supporter Harris Pitnof has arranged for the organization to benefit from the sale of his home upon his passing.

In addition to creating the trust, Harris designated the Food Bank as a partial beneficiary of one of his brokerage accounts with Fidelity Investments.

“The day I’m gone, without dealing with courts and judges, the Food Bank takes ownership of the house.”

Harris sees the arrangement as a win-win; relieving his family of the trouble of dealing with the house while providing food assistance for Rhode Islanders who need it.

Serving Kids Healthy Meals

The Food Bank’s Kids Cafe serves healthy meals to children at risk of hunger at after school programs in local community centers.

Students come directly from school and receive a delicious dinner to give them energy to focus, concentrate, and play during the rest of their day until it’s time for them to go home in the evening. They also learn about nutrition and making healthy choices when they eat.

For many of the children, Kids Cafe provides their only meal for the evening.

According to Martin DaCosta, Associate Director at the Boys & Girls Clubs of East Providence, one of the Food Bank’s Kids Cafe sites:

“Many kids would not eat dinner without Kids Cafe. Often, parents cannot afford the amount of food needed to feed their kids.”

Staff at the Food Bank develop a monthly calendar so that kids receive a variety of foods, often getting to experiment and try new things. Meals are prepared by the culinary students in the Food Bank’s Community Kitchen job training program. They’re learning to cook and prepare food knowing that they will help kids in need. Meals are delivered by Food Bank staff to the participating sites.

As one mom explained about her son, who participates in Kids Cafe at the West End Community Center in Providence, “It helps when he gets fed after school especially when I am not able to buy food because other bills are due.”

For more information on Food Bank programs like Kids Cafe, visit rifoodbank.org/what-we-do.
Empty Bowls Raises $117,000

Thank you to everyone who helped make this year’s Empty Bowls a huge success. Together, we raised more than $117,000 for the Rhode Island Community Food Bank.

This fantastic event would not have been possible without our Presenting Sponsor, Citizens Bank, and the generous support of 42 local restaurants and food vendors.

Save the Date

Truck Stop
Friday, April 26, 2019
5:30-8 PM
Food Bank Parking Lot
Enjoy tastes from 20+ local food trucks.

Empty Bowls
Thursday, October 17, 2019
5:30-8 PM
Rhodes on the Pawtuxet
40+ local restaurants serve delicious samples.

News from the Board of Directors

At the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank, four new members were appointed to the Board of Directors.

Maureen Barishian
Senior Accountant/Investment Analyst, Bryant University

Kim Keck
President & CEO, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island

Mary Eastman
Head of Personal Investing Acceleration, Fidelity Investments

Peter Marino
President & CEO, Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island

Status Report – Rising Prices Hurt Low-Income Families in Rhode Island

Recently, Food Bank CEO Andrew Schiff presented the 2018 Status Report on Hunger, outlining the challenges facing neighbors experiencing food assistance.

Low-income workers are not benefiting from Rhode Island’s improving economy. The high cost of household expenses in Rhode Island – including rent, fuel and food – has gone up dramatically, canceling out the financial gains of many workers.

Food inflation alone is out-pacing wage growth. In a study of supermarket prices in Rhode Island, food costs grew by 15 percent over the last two years. By comparison, workers’ wages increased by just 5 percent in the same time period.

Read the full report online at: rifoodbank.org/statusreporthunger.

Food Costs vs. Wages

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<th>July 2016</th>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Food Costs for Family of Four in RI</td>
<td>$252.82</td>
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<td>Average Weekly Earnings for Nonsupervisory Employees in US</td>
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Food prices shot up by 15%, while average earnings increased by only 5%

MAJOR FINDINGS

★ Hunger is more prevalent in Rhode Island than it was 10 years ago.
★ Food insecurity affects one in eight Rhode Island households.
★ Inflation outpaces wage growth for many workers.
★ Demand for food assistance remains high throughout the Food Bank’s statewide network of member agencies, serving 53,000 people each month.
Healthy Habits Recipe: Vegetarian Bean Burgers

Healthy Habits is a nutrition education program for people receiving food assistance from member agencies of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank. This healthy, low-cost recipe features the type of ingredients encouraged by the program. Take a look and try it out at home.

**Ingredients:**

- ¼ cup quinoa
- ½ cup water
- 15 oz. canned beans
- ¼ cup bread crumbs
- 3 tbsp minced red pepper
- ½ cup sweet potato (chopped small)
- ¼ cup minced onion
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

**Directions:**

1. Bring the quinoa and water to a boil in a saucepan.
2. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer until the quinoa is tender and the water has been absorbed, about 15 to 20 minutes.
3. Open canned beans and rinse thoroughly. Add beans and quinoa to a mixing bowl along with bread crumbs, red pepper, sweet potato, white onion, salt and Worcestershire sauce.
4. Once all ingredients are added, mix well smashing some beans to make a paste.
5. Make sure that you have some whole beans still in your mix as well. Once your mix is combined, you can start forming your burgers.
6. Heat up a sauté pan using 2 tbsp of olive oil and sear your burger for 4-5 minutes on each side.
7. Build your burgers and enjoy!