What’s Inside

- Listening to the Voices of Hunger
- The Paper Plate Campaign
- Truck Stop: A Festival of Street Eats
- Rhode Island Has Highest Food Insecurity in New England

Mission: The Rhode Island Community Food Bank provides food to people in need and promotes long-term solutions to the problem of hunger.

Spring 2013

Family Faces Hard Times with Gratitude and Grace

Spend a few minutes with Ray Anthony Flores and Kari Dickinson, and you’ll feel a lot better about Rhode Island and its future generations. This young family may be seeing hard times, but their words are full of gratitude, hopefulness and a desire to help others.

“I’m just thankful for waking up every day and having another day to see our children grow,” said Ray on a recent visit to the Jonnycake Center of Peace Dale, where once a month they are able to shop for free at the food pantry. “I’m grateful for places like this, and to the people who donate to them. My goal is to get back on my feet so that, in the very near future, I can be someone who donates here and gives back to the community.”

In the meantime, Ray and Kari aren’t waiting to give back. After their food pantry visit, they were heading out to a blood drive.

Ray has been out of work for a year, and on this day he was anxiously waiting for a call back from a local university about a maintenance job. At the moment, the couple’s only income is Kari’s part-time job at a fast food restaurant, where she earns minimum wage. Although minimum wage recently increased to $7.75 per hour, the reinstated payroll tax has all but eliminated that raise. Last month, her hours were cut.

Fortunately, they receive help from the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Food Stamps) and the Jonnycake Center, a member agency of the Food Bank.

“It’s hard,” Kari said. “With the economy as bad as it is, it’s not easy to give your children what you want to give them. Grocery shopping takes us a few hours because we work hard to get the best buys. The food pantry really helps because we don’t have to spend as much at the grocery store. It’s nice to know there are people who are willing to help you.”

Kari dreams of going back to school to become a hairdresser, but for the moment, she’s focused on raising her three children. Her 19-month-old daughter, Angelica, recently went through ear surgery.

“She’s doing great now,” said Ray. “She’s much more receptive to everything.” Angelica lives up to her name, freely handing out hugs to her mom, dad and people she meets at the food pantry.

Despite the challenges they face, Ray and Kari are relentlessly positive.

“I was born and raised here in Peace Dale,” said Ray. “I love Rhode Island. It’s a great place to raise a family and grow old. Everyone is struggling now. No one is immune to hard times. But you have to keep faith and keep moving forward.”
Listening to the Voices of Hunger

This fall, the Food Bank engaged in a unique project at our member agencies called the Paper Plate Campaign. We visited food pantries and meal programs across the state and asked people to step out of line for a moment to write a quick note on a paper plate about what food assistance means to them. We received hundreds of plates—each a unique, hand-written expression of one individual’s story.

The paper plates give voice to those facing hunger in Rhode Island. The purpose of the Paper Plate Campaign is to provide an opportunity for their voices to be heard at the State House. In February, we delivered the plates collected at each member agency to the state legislators in that district.

We hope that our political leaders will take the time to read the comments on each plate. We trust that they will see how critical food assistance is in the lives of their constituents and how essential it is to the well-being of their communities.

We encourage you to let your voice be heard as well. Let your local legislator know where you stand on support for the most vulnerable members of our society. Contact information for state legislators can be found on the “Advocate for Change” page of our website.

This newsletter features images of some of the paper plates that we collected. I’ve had the pleasure of seeing all of them. It didn’t take long for me to notice that there is one phrase repeated over and over again: “Thank you.”

Perhaps you’re not surprised that those receiving food assistance are extremely grateful. But for some, it’s more than just a respite from hunger. It is a sign that they are not forgotten; they are not alone. It is an acknowledgment that the community cares about them. And it clearly means a lot.

Let me add my gratitude to the hundreds of people who shared their thoughts and feelings during the Paper Plate Campaign. It is only because of your generosity that we are able to meet the high need for food assistance in every part of Rhode Island. Your support means that no one goes hungry. Thank you for joining the Food Bank in this important work.

Andrew Schiff, Chief Executive Officer

WHY I GIVE

We can’t really comprehend being without food. We eat so many things that we don’t need, and there are those who don’t even have the basic necessities.

We can’t imagine what it would be like to have no money to buy food. How do you explain this to a child? By giving to the Food Bank, we hope to help these people. Also, we are very impressed with how you are training people in your kitchen so they will be able to obtain jobs working in the food industry.

— Richard and Janice Mulhern, Food Bank donors since 1997
The Rhode Island Community Food Bank has appointed seven new members to its 24-member Board of Directors. The incoming Board Members include:

1. **Lorraine Burns** is the director of the Blessed Sacrament Food Pantry (formerly St. Teresa’s of Avila) in Providence. Ms. Burns returns to the Board after serving as a member of the Food Bank’s Honorary Board for several years. She has directed the food pantry for 15 years.

2. **Kimberly L. Cummins** is Senior Vice President of Communications, Education and Operations with Fidelity Investments in Smithfield. In this role, she is responsible for the communication experience and delivery on behalf of Fidelity’s Workplace Investing benefit programs. Ms. Cummins has more than 17 years of experience with Fidelity.

3. **Doug Fonseca** is Director of Shared Services and Outsourcing Advisory for KPMG in Providence. Previously, he worked as a project director and senior advisor at EquaTerra, Inc.

4. **Linda H. Newton** is the principle of Newton & Newton, LLC, a consulting firm in Providence specializing in community relations and diversity. She has more than 25 years of experience as a professional in the health insurance industry, including her role as Vice President of Community Relations and Diversity for Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island. She received the NAACP’s 2011 Rosa Parks award for community service.

5. **Kathy O’Donnell** is Senior Vice President, Director of Public Affairs for Citizens Financial Group, Inc., in Providence. In this role, she works with local public affairs teams throughout the company’s 12-state retail footprint. She manages Citizens Bank’s and Charter One’s local charitable contributions, philanthropic activities, community outreach and marketing sponsorships.

6. **Marilyn Warren** is Executive Director of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center in Newport, where she has worked since 2008. She has worked as an audiologist and teacher of the deaf, and she began her career in social services at Youth Pride, where she founded the food pantry.

7. **Jennifer Watkins** is Missionary Vice President of the Gospel Tabernacle Outreach Ministries, Inc. in Providence and Client Services Program Manager at the Crossroads RI Family Center, where she has worked for nearly 13 years. In her volunteer role with Gospel Tabernacle Outreach, she and her husband oversee operations of the soup kitchen, food pantry and outreach to the sick and shut-in members of their community.

**Stamp Out Hunger Saturday, May 11**

The second Saturday in May marks the biggest single-day food drive in the country. “Stamp Out Hunger” is a cooperative effort of the National Association of Letter Carriers, the United Way of Rhode Island, AFL-CIO Community Services and the United States Postal Service.

On Saturday, May 11, letter carriers across Rhode Island will volunteer to collect food donations from their postal patrons—an effort which requires a lot of extra time and energy. Last year, donations in Rhode Island totaled 117,000 pounds, thanks to the enthusiastic involvement of postal customers and letter carriers.

Please leave a bag of non-perishable healthy food items at your door early on the morning of May 11. Letter carriers will pick up the food and deliver it to the Food Bank, where it will be distributed to 178 member agencies in every corner of Rhode Island.
The Paper Plate Campaign

If someone gave you a paper plate and asked you to write a brief thought about the issue of hunger, what would you say?

In recognition of Hunger Action Month during September, the Food Bank posed this question to hundreds of everyday Rhode Islanders at farmers’ markets around the state. People from every walk of life stopped to share their thoughts and show their support for fellow Rhode Islanders suffering from hunger. Members of the Food Bank’s volunteer organization, Women Ending Hunger, helped to staff the farmers’ market events and educate the public about the work of the Food Bank.

In October, Food Bank staff took the Paper Plate Campaign to more than a dozen food pantries to ask people who are receiving services to share their thoughts about the importance of food assistance. Their heartfelt responses reminded us that there is a unique person with a distinct life story behind every paper plate.

Representatives from our member agencies delivered the paper plates to local legislators in February as food for thought for the legislative session. The delivery included an invitation to visit a food pantry in their district and meet people, face to face, who are having trouble feeding their families.

Let Your Voice Be Heard

The Paper Plate Campaign has demonstrated the power of one person’s words on an issue of great importance: hunger in Rhode Island. You can join the campaign by sending us your own reflections. Not sure what to write? Consider the following questions:

- Have you ever experienced the feeling of not knowing when your next meal would be coming?
- Can you imagine telling your child that she would have to go to school in order to get food?
- What can we do to solve the problem of hunger?
- How does being hungry affect your daily life?

We encourage you to email your thoughts to celder@rifoodbank.org or mail them to Cindy Elder, Rhode Island Community Food Bank, 200 Niantic Avenue, Providence, RI 02907. Please let us know if we have your permission to share your words with others. Thank you.

In Their Own Words

Here are just a few quotes from the Paper Plate Campaign—among hundreds like them—written by individuals who rely on the Food Bank’s network of member agencies to help them keep food on the table.

“We are all but one catastrophe away from needing this service and many others. Thank goodness they are there if we need them!”
—Client of East Bay CAP Food Pantry, East Providence

“A blessing that this place is here. Years ago I helped others. Now that I am in my ’70s, I need help.”
—Client of Lime Rock Baptist Church Food Pantry, Lincoln

“It’s reassuring to know there are so many people who care about others’ well-being.”
—Client of Salvation Army, Pawtucket

“The food pantry helped me when I was homeless and now I’m getting back on my feet. Thank you.”
—Client of St. Mary’s by the Bay Food Pantry, Warren

“With very little money left for food every week, what we are given is a help in feeding my children. Thank you very much.”
—Client of St. Robert’s Food Closet, Johnston
The food truck phenomenon that has been sweeping the nation has hit the Ocean State. From French cuisine to vegetarian tacos, food truck fare is the new “it” food. This year, the Food Bank is pleased to kick off the Eat Drink RI Festival with delicious tastings from the best local food trucks, breweries and wineries.

Join us on Friday, April 19, at 6 pm for Truck Stop: A Festival of Street Eats. This festive and casual evening of food, drink and entertainment will take place in a lively Downcity hot spot: the Bank of America City Center (skating rink). Tickets for the event are $50. If you’d like to come early and beat the crowds, you can get a VIP ticket for $75 and start the fun at 5:30 pm. You’ll receive extra tastings and a drink on us. To purchase tickets online, go to www.rifoodbank.org/TruckStop.

Truck Stop: A Festival of Street Eats is the opening event of the weekend-long Eat Drink RI Festival, a celebration of Rhode Island’s culinary talents. David Dadekian, editor of the culinary website EatDrinkRI.com, produces the festival. For a full listing of festival events, visit www.eatdrinkri.com/festival.

Participating Food Trucks
- Championship Melt
- Chez Pascal’s Hewtin’s Dogs Mobile
- Clam Jammers
- Like No Udder
- Flour Girls Baking Company
- Joedega
- Mijos Tacos
- Radish
- Rocket Fine Street Food
- Tallulah

Truck Stop: A Festival of Street Eats

April 19 Event Benefits the Food Bank

Friday, April 19, 2013
Bank of America City Center
6–9 pm

General Event Admission: $50
Enjoy tastings from the best local food trucks, breweries and wineries. (Cash bar)

VIP Reception & Event: $75
Beat the crowds and be the first to sample the fantastic food truck offerings. Come early at 5:30, enjoy extra tastings and have a beverage on us. Stay for the full evening of fun.

Tickets
www.rifoodbank.org/TruckStop
401-230-1673
Dine Out and Help the Food Bank

City Dining Cards has come to the Providence area with a unique fundraiser to benefit the Rhode Island Community Food Bank. Each “deck” of cards gives you $10 off a $30 meal at 50 great local restaurants. The deck costs $20. When you buy it online using our special code, $11 of the purchase price goes directly to the Food Bank.

Go to www.citydiningcards.com and enter the code RIFoodBank at checkout. They sell decks for other cities, including Boston. If you enter the RIFoodBank code, we’ll receive $10 for every out-of-state deck, too. You can also purchase the Providence deck at the Food Bank office. Thank you!

Making a Gift Through Your IRA

It’s now easier to make a gift to the Food Bank through your IRA. The IRA Charitable Rollover was extended through December 31, 2013 as a provision of the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012. 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) organizations, without having to count the transfers as income for federal income tax purposes.

For more details about giving through your IRA, and all forms of planned giving, please visit www.rifoodbank.org/Planned-Giving or call Lisa Roth Blackman at 401-230-1672.

A Taste of Food and Flowers

Hundreds of guests turned out for a magical evening of fine food, flowers and libations at the Taste of the Flower Show Preview Party at the Rhode Island Convention Center on February 20. This elegant evening featured 27 of the area’s finest culinary establishments, nestled among the exhibits of the Rhode Island Spring Flower and Garden Show. Our culinary partners included:

- Aspire
- B. Pinelli’s Simply Italian
- Bluefin Grille
- Cook & Brown Public House
- Bottles Fine Wine
- Cozy Caterers
- d. carlo Trattoria
- Easy Entertaining Inc.
- Eleven Forty Nine
- Fleming’s Prime Steakhouse & Winebar
- Greenvale Vineyards
- Gregg’s Restaurants and Pubs
- Guy Abelson Catering and Events
- McCormick & Schmick’s
- The Melting Pot
- Mill’s Tavern
- Narragansett Creamery
- New Harvest Coffee Roasters
- Pinelli’s Deli/Café at Night
- Rasoi
- Revival Brewing Company
- RI Community Food Bank’s Community Kitchen
- RISD Caters
- Russell Morin Fine Catering
- Seven Stars Bakery
- tazza
- Union Station Brewery

Thanks to our Signature Sponsor
Washington Trust Peanut Butter Drive

Washington Trust kicked off their 13th annual peanut butter drive in March. Over the last 12 years, the drive has produced donations, food and funds that added 100 tons of peanut butter to the Food Bank’s shelves.

This important source of protein is a favorite among children. Of the 66,000 people served by the Food Bank’s network of member agencies, one-third are children under the age of 18.

You can participate in the Washington Trust Peanut Butter Drive by visiting www.rifoodbank.org/peanutbutter. Thanks for spreading good will!

Feinstein Challenge

Alan Shawn Feinstein continues to encourage the nation to fight hunger with his 16th annual Feinstein Challenge. He will divide $1 million among hunger-fighting agencies across the country to help them raise funds this spring. Every dollar donated between March 1 and April 30 will be applied to his challenge.

Help us meet the Feinstein Challenge and leverage your gift as we work together to feed the hungry. To make your gift today, visit www.rifoodbank.org/donate or call 401-942-6325. Thank you!

Request a Speaker for Your Organization

The Food Bank’s Speakers’ Bureau provides speakers at no charge to your local civic group, faith community, business, school or organization. Our pool of trained speakers remains up-to-date on the latest facts and figures regarding the issue of hunger in Rhode Island, and they can put a real-world face to the challenges confronted by so many families in our state.

In recent months, we have presented at a variety of venues, from Rotary Clubs and major corporations to seniors groups and elementary schools. We encourage you to contact us to find out how we can fill your meeting calendar with a meaningful presentation on the issue of hunger in Rhode Island.

To schedule your speaker, please contact Cindy Elder at celder@rifoodbank.org or 401-230-1674.
Rhode Island now has the highest level of food insecurity among the New England states. Food insecurity means having limited access to adequate food for healthy living. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, Rhode Island’s food insecurity rate is now 15.5%, affecting 67,000 households. Of that amount, 6% experience severe food insecurity.

Twenty-four percent of Rhode Island households (over 175,000 people) receive benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as Food Stamps).

The Rhode Island Community Food Bank’s agency network now feeds more than 66,000 people each month. The number of Rhode Islanders served at food pantries jumped 10% in the last year.

Food Donations Drop
Trends in food manufacturing have dramatically affected the Food Bank’s supply of donated food in recent years. Improvements in inventory and quality control procedures have reduced the surplus food available for distribution.

While many food companies continue to support the Food Bank philanthropically, the fact remains that food donations to the Food Bank have declined by almost two million pounds in the last four years.

Food Bank Increases Wholesale Purchasing
The Food Bank now must purchase food from wholesalers to ensure a continuous supply of food for its member agencies. Food purchases, which are made possible by charitable giving and state funding, account for 39% of the food currently distributed by the Food Bank. Government funding (state and federal combined) accounts for just 6% of the Food Bank’s operating budget.

While the trend in food donations presents challenges, it also offers opportunities. Rather than relying on an unpredictable mix of donated food, the Food Bank is able to select healthier food choices when purchasing food. In addition, the Food Bank is teaching food pantry clients to make the most of their limited food dollars with a new educational program called Community Cooking: Wholesome Eating on a Budget.

Federal Nutrition Programs Meet Need, Boost Local Economy
The federal nutrition programs, which are a critical resource for low-income individuals and families, include SNAP, WIC (the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children), National School Lunch, School Breakfast and Summer Food Service Programs. Together, these five programs bring over $323 million in federal aid annually to Rhode Island.