A Place at the Table

NEWSLETTER OF THE RHODE ISLAND COMMUNITY FOOD BANK

SUMMER 2013

Childhood Hunger in Rhode Island

- 21.9% of R.I. children live in poverty
- 47,000 R.I. children live below the federal poverty threshold ($23,550 for a family of 4)
- 51,300 R.I. children receive free or reduced-price school lunch
- In 2012, only 5,940 children received free summer meals through the USDA's Summer Food Service Program

Sources: SFSP Participation, Rhode Island Department of Education, 2012; RI Kids Count 2013 Fact Book

Summertime Stress for Mothers of School-Aged Kids

Warren food pantry provides a lifeline to working parents on the edge of poverty

In 2005, I was on top of the world. We were never rich, but we were comfortable. The bills were paid. We had groceries. I donated to charity. Then all of a sudden, the recession hit and we did a 360. The rug was pulled out from under us.”

Zelia Westcott never saw it coming. She had a good job as a mental health worker at a hospital. Her husband was a truck driver, hauling steel for the construction industry. Their son and twin girls were happy in their local school. When the construction industry collapsed, her husband’s hours were cut in half. Zelia helped out by working overtime at the hospital—until she was injured by a client in November 2011. With only disability insurance and half-time work for her husband, the bills started piling up. Their house is now in foreclosure.

This desperation brought her to call her best friend and co-worker, Geraldine Camara, to ask for $5 to buy a loaf of bread and some milk for her children. Like Zelia, Geraldine has three school-aged children. Geraldine’s husband, who works as a handyman, has struggled to find regular work in the last few years. Geraldine was laid off from her job at the hospital and reassigned to a group home, where she can’t work overtime hours.

“I have a meal plan every week. That’s what I can afford. There’s no extra.”

St. Mary of the Bay Offers Hope

Geraldine did more than give her friend $5. She introduced her to St. Mary of the Bay Food Pantry in Warren, where these two best friends now make monthly visits to keep food on the table for their families. St. Mary’s is one of 178 member agencies of the Food Bank.

During the summer, both moms worry about how they’ll be able to provide enough food for their active children. Geraldine puts locks on her refrigerator and cupboards. “I don’t want to, but I have to,” she says. “I have a meal plan every week. That’s what I can

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Feeding Kids in the Summer

Several summers ago, I helped deliver meals to children who were playing in a park. The meals were part of the federal Summer Food Service Program, which serves children in low-income communities. When schools are closed for vacation, the program feeds children at parks, swimming pools and day camps—basically anywhere kids gather in the summertime.

After handing out sandwiches and milk cartons, I sat down next to a boy who had been playing basketball before lunch arrived.

“How’s lunch?” I asked.

“Not bad, if you’re really hungry,” he answered.

I asked if he had breakfast that morning. He said no. I asked when he ate his last meal. “When I was here yesterday,” he said in a soft voice.

At that moment, I realized that our lunch was the only thing preventing him from going hungry.

There are many causes of child hunger. Parents don’t have enough money to purchase food due to job loss, low wages or the high cost of other critical expenses, like rent. We know that parents will do anything they can to protect their children from hunger, but if the cupboard is empty, no one eats.

In the summer, without school lunch and breakfast programs, thousands of children are at risk. Last year, 51,300 children in Rhode Island received free or reduced-price school lunch, but only 5,940 received summer meals. This summer, the Food Bank is implementing several strategies to increase participation.

Thanks to a generous grant from Stop & Shop’s “Our Family Foundation,” we’re helping communities open new meal sites with fun games and activities, and we’re working with our member agencies to get the word out to parents. When parents of young children come to a food pantry this summer, they’ll receive a special kid-friendly food box and information about summer meal sites in their neighborhood. Along with our partners at the Rhode Island Department of Education, United Way 2-1-1, and the USDA, we’re promoting the program to parents in low-income communities across the state in hopes of reaching thousands more children this year.

I am grateful for your generous support of the Food Bank throughout the year, but especially now, when it is so important for us to ensure that no child goes hungry this summer. Together, let’s make summer a time children always want to remember.

Andrew Schiff, Chief Executive Officer

July is “Independents” Month

The spirit of independence is on full display this July, when many of Rhode Island’s independent grocers are running month-long food drives to keep the Food Bank’s shelves stocked. Keep your eye out for food and fund drive information at these local retailers:

- Belmont Market (Wakefield)
- Brigido’s Fresh Market (North Scituate, Slatersville, Pascoag)
- Eastside Marketplace (Providence)
- Tom’s Market (Coventry, Tiverton, Warren)
- Clements’ Marketplace (Portsmouth)
Summer Food Drive Fueled by Local Businesses

The Food Bank’s 2013 Summer Food Drive needs to collect 150,000 pounds of food to meet the increased demand during the difficult summer months. Fortunately, we’re off to a good start, with major donations from food drive sponsors Ocean State Job Lot and Go Veggie™. Other businesses supporting the drive include Bliss Bros. Dairy, Stop & Shop, Little Rhody Foods, Top This Fire-Grilled Pizza Crusts, Confreda Greenhouses & Farms, Pippin Orchard, Daniele Inc., Autocrat, Mansfield Paper Company, Munroe Diary, Pepsi Bottling Company, Roch’s Fresh Foods, Reinhart Food Service and AGAR.

You can help, too. Every dollar you donate enables the Food Bank to acquire three pounds of healthy food. You can donate online at www.rifoodbank.org/SummerFoodDrive. You can also drop off non-perishable food donations at the Food Bank between 8 am and 5 pm weekdays.

Dave’s Delivers Food & Funds

Throughout the month of April, all nine locations of Dave’s Marketplace offered special pricing on the Food Bank’s most-needed items and provided collection bins for donated food. In addition, they invited customers to make a cash donation at the register. Dave’s then matched every donation dollar for dollar.

The combination of donated food and funds generated 17,125 pounds of healthy food, which the Rhode Island Community Food Bank will distribute to food pantries around the state. Dave’s also donated 22,000 pounds of apples in May through a partnership with FirstFruits.

Wanted: Food Drive Organizers!

Be a hero in your own neighborhood, business, organization or faith community. Organize a food drive this summer to help keep food pantries stocked during the challenging summer months.

The Food Bank will provide Summer Food Drive posters, which you can customize with the date and location of your drive. You can also pick up collection boxes and an information packet that will help you lead a successful food drive.

For more information on how to run your own food drive, contact Farris Maxwell at fmaxwell@rifoodbank.org or 401-230-1690.

Food Bank Leads Hunger Study in R.I.

Hunger in America is the largest study of charitable food assistance in America. Sponsored by Feeding America, the national network of food banks, it takes place every four years with the assistance of volunteers and staff at food banks, meal sites and food pantries across the country.

The Rhode Island Community Food Bank is coordinating the Hunger in America 2014 study in our state. A highly trained team of volunteers is conducting client interviews at 99 of our 178 member agencies throughout the summer.

Results of the study are expected to be released in the spring of 2014.
“Truck Stop” Delivers Great Eats Downtown
Sell-out event attracts hundreds for a casual evening of gourmet food truck fare

On a blustery April evening, hundreds of Food Bank supporters poured into the Bank of America City Center for a festive evening featuring delectable samplings by eleven of Rhode Island’s finest food trucks. The event served as the kick-off of the Eat Drink RI Festival which celebrates Rhode Island’s culinary talent.

“Truck Stop: A Festival of Street Eats” raised more than $90,000 for the Food Bank, thanks to the generous sponsorship of many donors, including:

Special Thanks to:
Delta Dental
The Empire Loan Charitable Foundation
The Providence Journal Charitable Foundation
United Natural Foods, Inc.

Summer’s End New England Lobster Bake
To benefit culinary education and job training

Treat the whole family to a seafood extravaganza on Sunday, September 29, from 2–6 pm at the Hyatt on Goat Island in Newport. The Food Bank is teaming up with the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Culinary Federation (ACF) to present a traditional lobster and clam bake in a stunning setting overlooking Newport Harbor. Proceeds of the Summer’s End New England Lobster Bake will benefit the Food Bank’s Community Kitchen culinary job training program as well as scholarships for culinary students through the ACF.

Tickets are $75 per person and include lobster, mussels, steamers, sausage, chicken, chowder, vegetables, salad, dessert and beer or wine. A $10 children’s menu includes hamburgers and hot dogs, salad, ice cream and beverage.

For more information, call Kathy at 401-230-1673 or email kcorreia@rifoodbank.org.

Coming This Holiday Season

Rhode Island Monthly brings you Locally Grown — a cookbook filled with delicious recipes featuring local resources. It’s the perfect gift idea for everyone on your list. Net proceeds benefit the Food Bank.

For more information on Food Bank events, visit our events page at www.rifoodbank.org/Events or join our Facebook at www.facebook.com/RICFB.
Empowering Pantry Clients to Make Healthy Choices
Community Cooking teaches practical, money-saving skills

The students flip through their study guides, taking notes and asking questions. Working together, they calculate the grams of fat in a typical fast-food hamburger. The lesson comes to life when the instructor passes around a hamburger bun stuffed with 13 tablespoons of solid vegetable shortening – the equivalent of a hamburger with 65 grams of fat.

“That’s quite a lot of fat for you to consume in one meal,” says Kelly Steel, nutrition education coordinator for the food bank’s new program, Community Cooking: Wholesome Eating on a Budget. “Where does it make you feel pain?”

“You heart,” says one student.

“You arteries,” says another.

Community Cooking is empowering food pantry clients to make smarter, healthier choices. Hands-on cooking is combined with in-depth study of nutritional issues that can have a profound effect on people’s health as well as their food budget. By incorporating more vegetables, healthy proteins and fresh, seasonal produce, students gain a measure of control over their food security.

The program is based on research conducted by nutritionist Mary Flynn and Food Bank CEO Andrew Schiff. Their study, published in March in the Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition, found that plant-based recipes made with extra-virgin olive oil can help food pantry clients eat healthy while spending less money on food.

Interns from Johnson & Wales and Rhode Island College have enabled the Food Bank to expand the Community Cooking program. Current offerings include an eight-week course, one-day workshops and pop-in lessons at food pantries, where clients can learn something new while waiting in line for food.

VEGETARIAN CHILI

4 servings (about 9 cups)
Approximate cost for the recipe: $6.68 or $1.67 per serving

½ cup extra virgin olive oil
1 medium onion (red or white), chopped
2 cans corn, drained
28-ounce can crushed tomatoes
3 cans kidney, black, pinto or cannellini beans, drained & rinsed
Optional spices: 2 teaspoons ground cumin, 1 tablespoon chili powder, 2 teaspoons dry oregano, salt & pepper

DIRECTIONS

Heat the olive oil on medium heat in a large pan on top of the stove or in a slow cooker. Add onions; stir to combine with the oil; cook for about 10 minutes or until onions are translucent. Stir in drained corn and cook for another 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add seasonings to taste; stir to mix in evenly. Add tomatoes and beans; stir to combine. Reduce heat to medium low and simmer for about 45 minutes or longer, stirring occasionally. Serve over cooked brown rice or in a baked potato.
Under overcast skies in May, dozens of seventh graders from Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy poured out of a yellow school bus onto the fields of Franklin Farm in Cumberland. A few hours later, they had planted 7,000 seeds that will help to produce approximately 20,000 pounds of fresh produce for local food pantries.

Franklin Farm is one of seven volunteer-operated community farms across Rhode Island. Last year, these farms contributed a combined total of 51,260 pounds of fresh produce.

New Community Farm Breaks Ground in Warren
A fertile acre of land on the Warren/Swansea town line, owned by Dr. Charles McCoy of Barrington, became the newest addition to our roster of community farms this spring. Thanks to the generosity of Dr. McCoy and technical assistance from Chris Clegg at Four Town Farms, the new farm will begin harvesting eggplants, peppers and other produce for hungry families this summer.

Diane Stacy, a member of the Food Bank’s Women Ending Hunger group, stepped forward as volunteer manager of the farm. She’ll need lots of help throughout the summer with maintaining the deer fence and harvesting the crops. If you can help, contact Farris Maxwell at 401-230-1690 or fmaxwell@rifoodbank.org.

Volunteer Farmers Needed Across the State
If you enjoy getting your hands dirty and have a few hours to spare, please consider volunteering at any one of our community farms in Bristol, Cumberland, Smithfield, Warren or Woonsocket. For contact information of the farm nearest you, visit our website at www.rifoodbank.org/Farms. Or call us at 401-942-6325. Thank you!

Local Farm Businesses Give Generously
Many of the region’s farming businesses also contribute significant amounts of produce to the Food Bank every year. During the last fiscal year, nearly 250,000 pounds of produce came from local farms, both large and small:

- Young Family Farm: 162,114 pounds
- Confreda Greenhouse & Farm: 40,870 pounds
- Reichie Farms: 31,320 pounds
- Jaswell Farm: 5,585 pounds
- Pippin Orchard: 3,333 pounds
- Four Town Farm: 3,313 pounds
- Wishing Stone Farm: 1,145 pounds
- Steere Farm: 718 pounds

Summertime Stress for Mothers of School-Aged Kids

afford. There’s no extra. A lot of my kids’ friends have nice houses. They can eat steak and lobster. I’m sorry. We can’t do that.”

The food pantry is more than a lifeline for these hard-working families. The volunteers and staff lift their spirits with kindness, respect and even recipes to accompany the healthy foods they provide.

“I love these people,” said Geraldine. “They are the sweetest, most caring people. They don’t downgrade us. They make us feel like we’re important.”

Paying It Forward
Like many food pantry clients, Geraldine and Zelia are eager to contribute to the community which has given them a helping hand. Geraldine volunteers for a nearby VFW, where she assembles food baskets for veterans in need. Both women long for the day when they can make financial contributions to the pantry.

“We all have to pitch in,” says Geraldine. “It feels good to pay it forward. The people who donate to these pantries are paying it forward. They’re really helping people like us who have been down on our luck. I want them to know we’re working as hard as we can to make things better for our families.”
Stop & Shop’s “Our Family Foundation” Funds Meals4Kids

Vacation boxes encourage participation in Summer Food Service Program

When school lets out for the summer, more than 51,000 Rhode Island children lose something that makes a big difference to their health: school breakfast and lunch. What fills in that void during the long summer months, when children are even more active and in need of nourishment?

The federally funded Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) was designed to provide summertime meals to those children who rely on free and reduced-price school meals. Unfortunately, fewer than 6,000 Rhode Island children were served by the program last summer.

This year, a generous grant from Stop & Shop’s “Our Family Foundation” is helping the Food Bank to promote the Summer Food Service Program, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which funds the program, and the R.I. Department of Education, which administers it.

Thanks to this important grant, the Food Bank was able to purchase enough food to create 3,575 “Meals4Kids” vacation boxes, assembled with the help of many volunteers. Each box contains enough food to feed a child during the critical gap between when school lunch ends and the Summer Food Service Program begins. They will be distributed by food pantries to families with children, along with information on how they can participate in the SFSP site near their home.

Clients Helping Clients

Norma Morales (left) and Wendy Colcano volunteer as language translators at the PICA Food Pantry in Providence, where they also shop for food when their own cupboards are low. “I think it was my calling to help people,” said Norma, who also volunteers with the Salvation Army. Both women understand how difficult it can be to feed a family on a very limited budget.

“I feel good when people say thank you,” says Wendy, a certified nursing assistant with three children. Wendy and Norma’s language skills are a godsend to clients with limited English language proficiency. “The people who don’t speak English well—they’re afraid to ask, even if they really need something,” explains Wendy. “They almost cry when we help them. They’re so happy they can have some food for their kids.”

Striking Out Hunger Shooting for $500,000 Milestone

Partnership between the Citizens Bank Foundation, Cox Communications and the PawSox benefits the Food Bank

The PawSox pitchers are giving it their all this season, and every Rhode Islander should be cheering them on. Thanks to a unique partnership between the Citizens Bank Foundation, the PawSox and Cox Communications, every PawSox strike-out results in a $75 contribution from the Citizens Bank Foundation, up to a total of $75,000. Cox supports the effort with public service announcements throughout the season.

The annual campaign, known as Striking Out Hunger, has produced $425,000 in funds for the Food Bank since it began six years ago. If the PawSox pitchers throw 1,000 strike-outs or more this season, Striking Out Hunger will have reached the half-million dollar mark for donations over the life of the campaign. In addition, the campaign features food drives at McCoy Stadium where baseball fans can make a tangible contribution to those in need.
Giving with Purpose
Q&A with Kevin Rabbitt

Kevin Rabbitt is the founder of Atlantic Water Management, LLC and a long-time supporter of the Food Bank. In addition to financial gifts, Kevin volunteers his time at local food pantries and community gardens. He is a volunteer researcher for the Hunger in America study, a national study on hunger conducted through Feeding America.

Q: Why have you chosen to donate your time and resources to the Food Bank?
A: Most of my charitable work has been around hunger and homelessness. My faith drove me to it, and my upbringing. When you see a person huddled in a blanket in the street, that’s an obvious situation of need. But it’s a very small percentage of the need that exists out there. You can never tell if the person standing next to you in the supermarket or at your church might be suffering from hunger.

Q: What have you learned through your involvement with the Hunger Study?
A: When I volunteered in the last Hunger Study four years ago, it coincided with a huge dip in the economy. The people I interviewed were shell-shocked. Never in a million years did they think they would be standing in a food pantry. They had a story to tell, and they wanted to share it. This time around, I’m expecting to meet people experiencing depression, because from what I’m seeing, a lot of people are still stuck in a very desperate situation.

Q: What concerns you most about the issue of hunger?
A: The problem is greater than anyone would believe. Try to imagine what it would be like if you couldn’t take care of your children. Then just take a look at the wealth we have. If you have change in your pocket, you’re doing better than a lot of people.

Q: What needs to be done to help those in need?
A: People have to feel good about giving. I’ve come to understand that one of the best gifts I can give is money. As a business person, I can’t stand waste. My eyes have been opened as to how incredibly efficient the Food Bank is in getting food to those who really need it.

“I Wish I Could Do More”

We often hear from our supporters that they wish they could do more to help hungry families right here in Rhode Island. You can have a lasting impact on the health and happiness of those in need by making a legacy gift that helps people for years to come.

Here are three simple ways you can help:

• Include the Food Bank as a beneficiary in your will.
• Name the Food Bank as a beneficiary of an IRA or life insurance policy.
• Designate the Food Bank as the beneficiary of an IRA Charitable Rollover.

The IRA Charitable rollover has been extended through December 31, 2013. You can distribute up to $100,000 directly from an IRA to the charity of your choice without having to pay income taxes if you are 70 1/2 or older.

If you would like to explore other ways that you can help the Food Bank in years to come, please contact Director of Philanthropy Karen Fuller at 401-230-1676 or kfuller@rifoodbank.org or Chief Philanthropy Officer Lisa Roth Blackman at 401-230-1672 or lrbblackman@rifoodbank.org.

SAVE THE DATES

Summer’s End New England Lobster Bake
Sunday, September 29
The Hyatt, Goat Island, Newport
A benefit for the Food Bank’s Community Kitchen Program and culinary scholarships offered by the American Culinary Federation R.I. Chapter.

Family Concert with Bill Harley & Keith Munslow
Saturday, November 16
Lincoln School, Providence
Join the fun with hilarious and heartwarming performances by two of Rhode Island’s favorite children’s musicians. Tickets will go on sale in September.

Holiday Meal Drive Open House
Saturday, December 7, 9 am–Noon
All ages welcome! Bring donations of non-perishable food, sort food, meet local celebrities and enjoy a cappella music by the Voices of Christmas.

For details, visit www.rifoodbank.org/events.