

Executive Director  
Andrew Morehouse

Dear Friends,

Hopefully, you have heard us speak out recently about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP; formerly Food Stamps). This federal nutrition program is our nation's first line of

*“Your voices and your stories serve as a powerful tool in putting a face to a solvable problem.”*

defense against hunger and food insecurity. The two recent cuts to SNAP (the automatic cut last November and the more recent one in the recently passed Farm Bill) will profoundly harm more than one million people across the country and 125,000 in Massachusetts—primarily elders and people with disabilities on fixed incomes. The Food Bank of Western Mass. and the other 204 food banks that form Feeding America (the national network of food banks) simply cannot meet the emergency food needs of 1 in 8 Americans without SNAP and government investments in other federal nutrition programs. All levels of government have a critical role to play in ensuring that we have a healthy society and a strong economy.

For this reason, we engage in advocacy on food policy. We inform and educate the public about hunger and food insecurity, and ways to take action. Obviously, we are very disappointed with the cuts to SNAP funding, but appreciate the advocacy that many of you have done on behalf of the clients we serve—now reaching close to 200,000 annually. Without our collective strong voice, we could not have prevented many of the more egregious proposals to reduce funding for SNAP. Your voices and your stories serve as a powerful tool in putting a face to a solvable problem.

We are committed to leading the community in the fight against hunger. As we turn our attention to the Massachusetts state budget process for next fiscal year (beginning July 1st), it is more important than ever for our state and local representatives to understand the impact that their decisions have on the lives of the people whom they represent. You can still play a critical role in effectively communicating our message with decision makers here in Massachusetts.

This spring, we will lead many of our partner feeding programs in Western Massachusetts to meet with each and every one of our 26 state representatives and senators to advocate for state funding for the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP). To learn more about MEFAP and how you can get involved, visit the Advocacy section of our website. Let us know if you'd like to join us. Thanks again for all your support! ●

The mission of The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts is to work with our community to reduce hunger and increase food security. Published by The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, [www.foodbankwma.org](http://www.foodbankwma.org), info@foodbankwma.org, 413-247-9738  
Executive Director, Andrew Morehouse • Word of Mouth Editors, Megan Pete and Chris Wojcik • Designed by MBDdesign, mb.design@comcast.net.  
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Facilitating change through advocacy continued from page 1

including Sen. Benjamin Downing, Rep. Tricia Farley-Bouvier, Rep. Paul Mark, Rep. Peter Kocot, and Sen. James Welch. They discussed the importance of constituents advocating on their own behalf and the role that feedback from voters in their district plays in their work. We are extremely grateful for the time and support to our network of emergency food providers.

“The sessions were very helpful,” explains Tracey Levy, Program Director of the Amherst Survival Center. “It allowed us to identify new opportunities for engaging our clients that come to our center.”

A number of recent circumstances have influenced the increased need for advocacy work. On November 1, SNAP benefits were cut for more than 47 million Americans through the expiration of the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. In addition, the elimination of unemployment benefits in December left many out of work job seekers wondering where their next meal will come from. On February 5, Congress passed the Farm Bill legislation, which included an \$8 billion cut to SNAP effecting an estimated 850,000 households, resulting in an average loss of \$90/month.

Many agencies in Western Massachusetts have already seen an increase in people seeking assistance. “It’s really too early to get definitive statistics on the increase,” explains Levy. “But, there is no doubt that we are seeing higher numbers than are typical for this time of year—most of which are new faces.” As part of the workshops, agencies collaborated to design a community-focused advocacy campaign for the current legislative session. The campaigns communicated a message and told the stories of the people that the emergency food network serves on a daily basis. The campaigns also empower people to advocate on their own behalf and demonstrated that their voice can be heard and make a difference in the community. ●



Rep. Peter Kocot spoke to representatives from our Hampshire County member agencies about the important role that feedback from his constituents plays in his work.

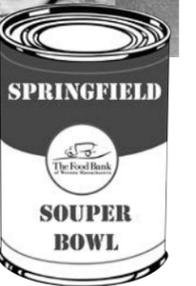
Earning Advocacy Hall of Fame honors

The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts is proud to announce that, in January, we were inducted into the Feeding America Advocacy Hall of Fame. We are part of an elite group as only one of twelve food banks in the nation to be included. As a new member of the Hall of Fame, we will have our name engraved on a plaque to be featured at Feeding America’s Washington, DC office. To be considered for the Hall of Fame, we had to meet a variety of criteria and complete several advocacy projects throughout the year. It was necessary to demonstrate leadership through contacting members of Congress, engaging the local media on policy issues and educate & mobilize local organizations about policy issues.

Advocacy for hunger-related issues isn’t just for those individuals struggling with food insecurity, or the agencies that provide food. Everyone has a voice in communicating with their state and federal representatives to help bring about change to our community. To learn about how to join our advocacy team, visit our website at [foodbankwma.org/take-action/advocate](http://foodbankwma.org/take-action/advocate).



5th grade students from White Street School in Springfield were one of the 16 elementary schools participating in the inaugural Springfield SouperBowl.



Inaugural Springfield SouperBowl gets kids involved with supporting the community

This winter, The Food Bank, in partnership with The Springfield Public School System, initiated the first Springfield SouperBowl—a competition for 5th grade students to collect the most pounds of food per student. Sixteen elementary schools took part in the week-long competition (from January 27–31), collecting non-perishable food items to benefit The Food Bank.

SouperBowl Top Schools	lbs./student	Total lbs.
Milton Bradley Elementary	23.21	1,625
Glenwood Elementary School	21.42	964
Daniel B. Brunton Elementary School	21.06	1,411

Final results from all 16 schools can be viewed at [www.foodbankwma.org/events/souperbowl](http://www.foodbankwma.org/events/souperbowl).

*“I was really proud of bringing food and helping all the people who don’t have food.”*

— Laura Ortiz, 5th grade student at Milton Bradley Elementary School

It is more than a typical food drive, as it is designed to motivate students to make a difference in the lives of those around them and become active members in their communities. In addition, it demonstrates to students the value of volunteering and the power that working together can have.

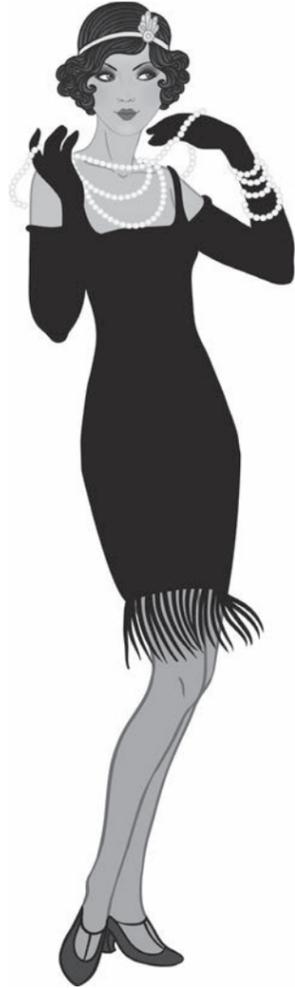
In only its first year, The Springfield SouperBowl collected a total of 10,091 pounds of food from participating school. For more information on how you or your school can become involved, e-mail The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts at [development@foodbankwma.org](mailto:development@foodbankwma.org). ●

Big Y helps The Food Bank ‘Sack Hunger’



Big Y’s 3rd Annual Sack Hunger campaign was the largest yet, collecting 63,388 lbs. of food for The Food Bank. Since 2011, this campaign, relying on the generosity of Big Y’s customers, has provided more than 130,000 lbs. of food (approximately 108, 333 meals.) THANK YOU BIG Y for helping “sack Hunger!”

THE FOOD BANK GALA  
**SPEAKEASY  
SOIREE**  
PRESENTED BY  
Bank of America



**You Can Help Prohibit Hunger**

Friday, April 25 at 6:30 pm at The Log Cabin in Holyoke  
Hosted by Seth & Ashley from WWLP's Mass Appeal



Couples enjoy an evening of dancing at the 2012 Food Bank Gala: *Cirque De L'Espoir.*

Our biennial Food Bank Gala, started by a committee of chefs and restaurant owners, was created as a way to engage the food and wine industry to support a cause near and dear to their heart—hunger. This signature event is an exciting opportunity to become involved and participate in helping the community while supporting The Food Bank in their efforts to feed our neighbors in need and lead the community to end hunger.

- Delicious culinary delights will be served up by some of the area's top restaurants, including Blue Heron, 30 Boltwood at The Lord Jeffery Inn, Eastside Grill and The Farm Table.
- We'll be offering a sampling of wine, spirits and craft beer.
- A live band will be performing their funky style of jazz.
- If you're feeling lucky, you can roll the dice at one of our many casino game tables (chips only, no cash value).
- There will be a live and silent auction, where you'll have a chance to bid on some fanciful packages.

For more information, and to make your reservation to the event, visit [www.foodbankwma.org/events](http://www.foodbankwma.org/events).

**WILL BIKE  
4 FOOD**

**Four routes. One destination...  
a community without hunger.**

Ride as an individual or as part of a team

**SEPTEMBER 28** Registration is now open  
Visit: [foodbankwma.org/events/bike](http://foodbankwma.org/events/bike)

to our supporters  
**thank you**

The following businesses, organizations, and foundations made a gift of \$1,000 or more between October 16, 2013 and January 31, 2014:

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| American Homecare Federation, Inc.            | Fallon Community Health Plan                     | Pioneer Cold                               |
| Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Inc.   | Farm Credit East Cares                           | Sinauer Associates, Inc.                   |
| Berkshire Brewing Company Inc                 | Four Seasons Wine & Liquor                       | Stock Gumshoe                              |
| Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts       | Gimbel Foundation Fund                           | Shop & Shop New England                    |
| Caroline Blanton Thayer Charitable Trust      | Grainger Foundation                              | Sylvester's Restaurant                     |
| Channing Bete Company, Inc.                   | Green Fields & McCuster's Co-op Markets          | TD Charitable Foundation                   |
| Cherry Rum Automotive                         | Harpoon Brewery                                  | Ted Ondrick Company, LLC                   |
| CKP Communications, LLC                       | Highland Street Foundation                       | The Dennis Group, LLC                      |
| Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts | Holy Family Parish                               | The Gould Family Foundation                |
| Credit Data Services, Inc Fund                | Ledgeway Charitable Trust                        | The Howat Family Foundation                |
| CSX Corporate Citizenship                     | Linde Family Foundation                          | The Prentice Foundation, Inc               |
| Delta Sand and Gravel, Inc                    | MassMutual Financial Group/ Matching Gift Center | The TJX Foundation, Inc.                   |
| Emergency Food and Shelter Program            | Montague B.P.O. Elks #2521                       | Thornes Marketplace                        |
| Eugene A. Dexter Charitable Fund              | New Covenant Community Services Inc.             | VFW Post 10338 Emergency Food Pantry       |
| Fair Share Foundation                         | NEX Performance Films                            | Vivian and Paul Olum Charitable Foundation |
|   | Northampton Cooperative Bank                     | Wakefern Food Corporation                  |
|   | Northfield Mount Hermon School                   | Walmart Foundation                         |
|   |  | Webster Bank                               |

**April is National Volunteer Month** Join us all month long as we celebrate the volunteers who make our work possible. For more details, visit [www.foodbankwma.org](http://www.foodbankwma.org).

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of Western Massachusetts  
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Your name is safe. In more than 30 years of service, we have never rented, sold, or loaned our donor list, and we never will. Without our donors, our work would not be possible. We value your support and your privacy.

The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts  
**word** of mouth  
our region's fight against hunger begins here.



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**E-NEWS**  
Stay in touch with The Food Bank through our monthly e-newsletter. Sign up at [foodbankwma.org](http://foodbankwma.org)



A Member of **FEEDING AMERICA**

**Facilitating Change Through Advocacy**

Here at The Food Bank, we rely on both state and federally funded programs to provide us with approximately 55% of our food. No other organization or individual does more to help put food on the table for people in need. To achieve our mission of feeding our neighbors in need and leading the community to end hunger, we must build partnerships across the public and private sectors. Everyone can play a role. We work to educate elected officials about the impact of food insecurity in our communities and identify and advance policy solutions to put struggling families on the road to healthy, hunger-free lives.

**Advocacy 101**

This winter, we held a series of advocacy training workshops for our partner agencies in the emergency food network. The training sessions were designed to provide resources and tools for agencies to engage their clients and help empower them to effectively communicate a message to legislators concerning issues surrounding hunger.

Also attending the workshops were legislators (and/or their staff) representing the four counties of Western Massachusetts, *continued on page 3*

*Pictured above: After participating in our agency advocacy training in Hampden County, as well as receiving a number communications from constituents through The Food Bank's advocacy campaign, Senator Welch put Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP) on his list of policy priorities for the fiscal year 2015 state budget.*