

word

our region's stand against hunger begins here.



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E-NEWS

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Help fill empty stomachs during Hunger Action Month

An empty plate means an empty stomach. On an empty stomach, no one can reach their full potential. Simple daily tasks become increasingly difficult when our minds are focused on hunger. We can't think, we can't focus, and we can't learn.

That is why this September, The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, together with the Feeding America nationwide network of food banks, will mobilize across all 50 states in an effort to bring an end to hunger. Hunger Action Month is designed to inspire people to take action and raise awareness of the fact that 42 million Americans, including 13 million children, are food insecure (according to the USDA).

Right here in the four counties of western Massachusetts, more than 223,000 people annually rely on the local emergency food network to help put food on their table. Nearly one-third are children who live with empty stomachs, which put healthy lives and promising futures at risk.

Hunger is a solvable problem, and we need your help to put an end to it. During Hunger Action Month, there are a number of ways for you to take action, including raising awareness of hunger issues, advocating for change, donating food and funds, or volunteering your time and skills. As individuals, charities, businesses and government, we all have a role to play in getting food to our neighbors in need. This is your opportunity to join a movement that has a real and lasting impact to feed more people than ever before. ●



Executive Director
Andrew Morehouse

Dear Friends,

Because The Food Bank feeds people struggling to put food on the table, it's often easy to forget that the second part of our mission is to "lead the community to end hunger." We know that if we are ever to achieve the cliché of "putting ourselves out of

"To have something to offer families that is patient-centered and timely is really appreciated. I have heard nothing but positive feedback."

business," as a society, we must solve the underlying causes of hunger.

Last March, we released an Action Plan to End Hunger, which does just that. The Task Force to End Hunger prioritized three areas of action: 1) Erase the stigma associated with hunger, 2) develop a mechanism to provide integrated services for those who need them, and 3) advance public policy to solve hunger.

Now, The Task Force's planning phase has transitioned into action with the creation of a Coalition to End Hunger, composed of some Task Force members and many new partners committed to working together. Presently, three teams are meeting regularly to support the three priorities. (Please contact us if you would like to learn more about them and/or get involved.)

One tangible result of our Action Plan already is a food insecurity screening pilot initiative that has been launched in Holyoke. The Food Bank, Holyoke Health Center and several other Coalition partners have banded together to integrate food assistance and other social services into the provision of health care. Since the beginning of July, Holyoke Health Center staff has begun screening its pediatric patients for food insecurity during its intake process. Food-insecure patients are being referred to The Food Bank, which is providing food assistance at sites close to where they live, enrolling patients into the federal SNAP program, and connecting them to a network of support services such as housing, job training and child care.

Already, we are seeing positive results in this pilot phase. Vinny Biggs, MD and lead pilot pediatrician, said recently, "Pediatric providers have been very excited to participate. To have something to offer families that is patient-centered and timely is really appreciated. I have heard nothing but positive feedback." Our vision is to expand this pilot to all Holyoke Health Center patients and then replicate it at hospitals and community health centers across our region. In this way, we hope to solve hunger for many and "shorten the line" at local pantries and meal sites. ●

The mission of The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts is to feed our neighbors in need and lead the community to end hunger.

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HUNGER ACTION

How will you take action?

To get started on these actions and learn about others, visit our website at foodbankwma.org.

September 7:

Breakfast at The Bank

Join us for a light breakfast, a tour of our facility, and a conversation about the impact SNAP has on our local community.

You can also cheer on our executive director, Andrew Morehouse, who will be kicking off Hunger Action Month by cycling the 100-mile Will Bike 4 Food course.

September 14:

Hunger Action Day

Go Orange on Hunger Action Day by wearing orange-colored clothing and accessories to raise awareness. Encourage your family, friends, and coworkers to join you. Be sure to share your Go Orange photos on social media using the hashtag #HungerAction.

September 30:

Legislator Volunteer Day

Join Franklin County legislators and volunteer at The Food Bank to help sort and pack emergency food for distribution.

Tuesdays in September

Packard's Trivia Night (8 p.m.)

Grab some friends and join the fun for trivia night. Entry fee to play is \$10, or just \$5 with a non-perishable food item donation. All proceeds will be donated to The Food Bank.



Volunteers from Greenfield Savings Bank volunteered their time at The Food Bank to help sort and pack food for distribution.

All month long:

Fork It Over For Food

We're partnering with local restaurants and asking diners to make a donation at the end of their meal, 100% of which goes directly to The Food Bank. A list of participating establishments is available on our web site.

Volunteer

Volunteers are a crucial part of our work, and we couldn't operate without their dedication and support. Sign up for a shift.

Participate in an event

Whether it's Will Bike 4 Food or our Farm-To-Table series, there are a number of fund raising events happening every month that directly support our work.

Donate

Cement your commitment to this cause by becoming a

monthly donor of The Food Bank. For every dollar donated, we're able to provide three meals to a neighbor in need.

Advocate

Communicate with our elected officials about local food security issues and urge them to provide the resources needed to help end hunger. By lending your voice, you can bring positive change.

Social Media

Engage others in the on-going conversation about food insecurity in our community by following us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and now on Meet-Up.

Subscribe to our e-mail list

Sign up to receive The Food Bank's e-newsletter to stay up to date with all the ways that you can take action each month. ●

N MONTH™



7th Annual

WILL BIKE 4 FOOD

Presented by  Stop & Shop®



Four routes. One destination. A community without hunger.

Sunday, September 24, 2017 | The Lion's Club Pavilion, Hatfield

Register now at willbike4food.org

Will Bike 4 Food is returning for its seventh year on Sunday, September 24. This exciting event provides a special opportunity for riders of all ages to enjoy a fun-filled day with other cyclists, while helping to feed our neighbors in need. Choose the 10, 25, 50, or 100-mile route through the Pioneer Valley, designed to accommodate all ages and riding abilities.

Last year, more than 350 riders raised \$114,000 to prevent hunger in our region. We're counting on your support to exceed last year's success and help even more children, seniors, veterans and hard-working families. When you ride in Will Bike 4 Food, you're raising awareness of hunger and food insecurity in our area. You can choose to ride as an individual or recruit at least four family members, friends or co-workers to form a team. Registration is already open through our website at willbike4food.org.

When you're done riding, you'll want to make sure you stay for the After-Party. We'll have a cookout with food from Smithsonian Caterers, including BBQ chicken, burgers, hot dogs and salads. Berkshire Brewing Company will be back to serve their selection of craft beer. There will also be music, games and more. Non-riders can join the fun, as tickets will be sold separately for the After-Party on our website (riders do not need to purchase After-Party tickets). ●

Volunteers needed

Volunteering is a great way to support Will Bike 4 Food for those who are unable to ride at the event. Last year, approximately 100 volunteers helped to make the event run smoothly.

We have a number of opportunities available, including route patrol, water stop support, registration, food and beverage service, and many more.

If you would like to make a difference to a family in need and have the time and enthusiasm to share, visit our web site at willbike4food.org.

Local church takes on summer hunger in Pittsfield

On the first day of the Kids Summer Lunch program at First United Methodist Church in Pittsfield, 14-year-old Felicia and her grandmother, Ella, were working diligently as part of the volunteer staff that helped serve the day's meal. The work wasn't new to them, as they began helping out in the kitchen seven years ago when Ella brought her grandchildren there to receive their own meals.

No-cost summer meals are crucial for kids like Felicia and her siblings. During the months when school is out of session, more than 72,500 students across the four counties of western

Massachusetts lose the free and reduced lunches they rely upon during the other nine months of the year. Families with limited resources often can't afford to make up for these missed meals, resulting in a sharp increase in child hunger. That's why seasonal meal programs are so vital to the well-being of children.

First United Methodist Church takes a holistic approach to assisting anyone in the community who needs a helping hand. Along with providing kids with summer lunches, they offer other food assistance programs that give both youth and adults breakfast, lunch, dinner, and emergency food throughout the week.

The kids that come to the church for the Kids Summer Lunch program typically arrive in groups, accompanied by counselors, from Pittsfield-area day care centers, camps and summer schools. Each weekday morning, these groups contact the church with the number of kids they'll be bringing, so that enough lunches can be prepared. They serve as many as 110 kids each day, free for anyone under the age of 18.

As a member agency of The Food Bank, the church staff and volunteers receive training, consultation and support from our agency relations staff to help them operate their food pantry and emergency meal programs as efficiently as possible. The Food Bank also provides food to the church, including frozen meats and locally-grown produce.

Alice Rose, outreach director for the church's meal site and food pantry, says that this ongoing partnership has been crucial for her agency's survival. "The Food Bank is our lifeline," she said.

Felicia understands the importance of providing free, healthy meals to kids who might otherwise go hungry and says that she finds working for the summer lunch program rewarding.

"Parents don't always have enough money to buy (lunch) every single day," she said. "Some people can barely support (their kids) for dinner and breakfast. So, it's way better, because it gives them a free meal and the parents have less worries." ●



Children from Pittsfield-area community groups enjoy a free meal as part of the Kids Summer Lunch program at First United Methodist Church in Pittsfield.

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the gathering



**A FARM-TO-TABLE
SERIES**

**October 8, 2017 • 3 – 6 p.m.
Red Fire Farm (Granby)**

Tickets still remain for our final farm-to-table dinner. Don't miss out on a quintessential New England autumn event at one of our partner farms. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit www.foodbankwma.org.

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