

word

our region's stand against hunger begins here.



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E-NEWS

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Supporting Puerto Rican self-evacuees following Maria's devastation

September 20, 2017 will forever be etched into the memory of every single resident of Puerto Rico. On that day, Hurricane Maria — regarded as the worst natural disaster in the history of the island — made landfall on the U.S. territory. The category 5 storm brought heavy rain and flooding to the island, along with sustained winds of 65 mph (with gusts up to 113 mph). In its catastrophic aftermath, millions of residents were left without homes, power, fuel, food, adequate drinking water or cell phone service. For hundreds of thousands of desperate families, evacuation from the island to the mainland United States was their only opportunity for survival.

Their arrival in western Massachusetts has been met with a new set of challenges. Self-evacuees are arriving without basic necessities such as food, housing or proper clothing for a New England winter. Many are struggling with health issues associated with their lack of food or medical attention following the storm. They are anxious to find work, housing and get their children enrolled in school.

In Holyoke, Enlace de Familias Resource Center has been designated by the Commonwealth as one of 22 welcome centers for Puerto Rican self-evacuees. Since they began arriving in early October, Enlace has been assisting anywhere from 13–23 families

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Pictured above: The Food Bank's truck sits outside of Enlace de Familias during a weekly delivery of food to support Puerto Rican self-evacuees.

**Hunger is the canary in
the coal mine**



Executive Director
Andrew Morehouse

Dear Friends,

I fear that the United States of America has conceded defeat on the War on Poverty. There was scant talk about poverty from either of the two major presidential candidates during last year's election.

“Smart reforms would invest in glide paths of support for families to transition successfully from poverty to jobs.”

I haven't heard much from Washington since then. The only promise in the recently-passed tax bill just signed into law is the “trickle down” argument that didn't pan out after the last major tax reform of the 1980s. The American Dream of upward mobility for most of the poor and even working families has become just that ... a dream.

From my vantage, hunger and food insecurity are not only symptoms of poverty, but they have become the new and lower denominator of deprivation acceptable to society before we feel compelled to act out of charity, if not moral outrage.

In western Massachusetts, the spike in food assistance that became necessary during the Great Recession in 2007 hasn't subsided significantly after almost a decade. On the contrary, it's climbed to a high plateau and remained there.

Hunger is the canary in the coal mine. Households that can't afford food are also struggling to pay other bills, including rent (or mortgage), utilities, transportation, child care, and health bills.

With so many fellow citizens already in dire straits, I worry about what lies ahead with talk of “entitlement reform,” a euphemism for deep cuts to social programs to offset the projected \$1.45 trillion deficit over the next decade due to the new tax law. Our nation's historic federal nutrition programs, including SNAP and school meals, are on the chopping block.

Further whittling away at social programs will only further weaken our country. Smart reforms would invest in glide paths of support for families to transition successfully from poverty to jobs. Instead, existing policies impose cliffs that abruptly cut off supports and trap the poor in the vicious cycle of poverty and dependency on public assistance.

With even a weaker public safety net, there is no way The Food Bank will be able to feed everyone who needs food if our nation's federal nutrition programs are gutted and we experience another major recession. If that happens, what will be the next lowest acceptable common denominator of deprivation? ●

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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SELF-EVACUEES continued from page 1

each day (approximately 300 people per week). They assist families with navigating the complicated, and often confusing, process of phone calls and paperwork to arrange for temporary housing. They also provide them with food and clothing, and connect them with their community support resources to transition into the area.

“Every case is individual,” explains Betty Medina Lichtenstein, Executive Director of Enlace de Familias. “These families have just gone through the absolute worst experience of their lives; and then they come here and have to deal with a lot of uncertainty.”

The Food Bank is collaborating with community organizations throughout the region to meet their most basic need: food.

Since November 14, we have been making weekly deliveries to Enlace to provide food for approximately 125 families per week. The provisions of canned fruit and vegetables, soup, rice, beans, cereal, pasta, peanut butter and other staples afford families nourishment as they get themselves settled. Additionally, our Agency Relations team is connecting families with our local partner agencies so they can continue to access healthy food.

Our SNAP team is making routine visits to Enlace to assist self-evacuees with applying for federal SNAP benefits, the largest domestic hunger program that serves as an important resource for food-insecure households to purchase healthy food.

“Everybody wants to help, but the amount of people to feed is enormous,” says Betty. “We wouldn’t be able to do the work that we do without the support of The Food Bank.”

The impact of self-evacuees on the region extends beyond the city of Holyoke. In Springfield, the Gandara Center/Springfield Family Resource Center is also welcoming people coming to the area from Puerto Rico. The Food Bank has also been delivering food weekly to this center since December. Many of our partner food pantries and meal sites across the region have reported an increase of visits due to self-evacuees.

As we begin 2018 facing these unprecedented challenges, we are reminded that it is going to take all of us, working together, to strengthen our community. It is through your support that we are able to feed our neighbors in need. We thank you for your continued commitment to our mission. Together, we can ensure that everyone in our region has access to healthy food, regardless of their circumstances. ●



Volunteers and staff at Enlace de Familias organize food and clothing to be distributed to families. The Food Bank has been making weekly deliveries to the center, providing food for approximately 125 families per week.

Monte's March raises \$258,000

Thank you for supporting this amazing event

On November 20 & 21, 2017, 93.9 The River's Monte Belmonte once again led his group of community supporters, political representatives and business leaders along the streets of the Pioneer Valley for the eighth consecutive Monte's March event. This year's March raised more than \$258,000 for The Food Bank. Thank you to all of our sponsors, donors and supporters who helped make this year's event such a tremendous success. Your efforts will provide more than 774,000 meals to our neighbors in need. ●



Advocating for a healthier future

April 2017 saw the rollout of the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) in Massachusetts, providing a dollar-for-dollar match for SNAP recipients when they purchase fresh produce at farmers markets, farm stands, CSAs and mobile markets. Funded by the USDA and implemented by the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), it has been wildly successful, allowing thousands of Massachusetts residents to purchase healthy produce and close to 200 local farmers to increase their sales.

Making sure that HIP remains funded is one of The Food Bank's top public policy priorities for 2018. We have been working closely with DTA and other community partners (including CISA, the Massachusetts Food System Collaborative and The Franklin County Food Council) to ensure a smooth roll out and expansion of the program.

Other state-level policy priorities include:

- Increased funding for the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP) for food banks to purchase more food;
- Legislation that would require schools with 60% or higher free- and reduced-lunch populations to serve breakfast to all students in their classrooms, after the morning bell.

We will also be keeping a close eye on the Farm Bill and the budget reconciliation process, and working hard to oppose any proposed changes in funding to SNAP or The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).

Your voice can make positive change and bring the issue of hunger to the forefront. We urge you to sign up to receive our advocacy alerts at foodbankwma.org/enews. ●

National Donut Day Beer Pairing PARTY

Honoring 20 Years of Partnership with
Berkshire Brewing Company

Fri., June 1, 2018 [National Donut Day]

5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Storrowton Tavern, West Springfield

Tickets: \$50

www.beeranddonuts.info



You're invited to this year's very special Spring Event: National Donut Day Beer Pairing Party. This fun competition will recognize Berkshire Brewing Company's 20 years of supporting The Food Bank.

The event will feature local donut shops and bakeries, each of which will be assigned a specific Berkshire Brewing Company beer. They'll be tasked with creating a donut that pairs with that beer. Our guests and judges will have a chance to sample all the pairings and vote for their favorite.

For the past 20 years, Berkshire Brewing Company has supported our mission to feed our neighbors in need, donating 10% of gross sales of every bottle, growler and keg of their Shabadoo Black & Tan Ale. This donation has provided the equivalent of more than 600,000 meals.

Tickets for this 21 & over event are available online at www.beeranddonuts.info. ●

2018 Calendar of Events

The Food Bank has a number of fun and unique events planned throughout 2018. From farm-to-table, to a dinner on the vineyard, you can join other like-minded people in our community, have a fun time out, and support the mission of The Food Bank. Here are just a few things we have planned:

Farm-to-Table Dinner

July 29, 2018

E. Cecchi Farm, Feeding Hills

An elegant on-farm dining experience prepared by the chefs at Wheelhouse Farm Truck & Catering, using ingredients sourced directly from the farm.

Chefs Dinner by the River

September 6, 2018

Good Stock Farm, Hatfield

A five-course dinner on the banks of the Connecticut River, prepared by top chefs from some of The Pioneer Valley's best restaurants.

Will Bike 4 Food

September 30, 2018

Hatfield Lyons Club Pavilion, Hatfield

An annual event for cyclists of all ages and experience levels. Choose between 10, 25, 50, and 100 mile routes.

Glendale Ridge Vineyard Dinner

October 14, 2018

Southampton, MA

Dine amongst the vines with stunning fall views of the mountains. This multi-course meal will be prepared by Wheelhouse Farm Truck & Catering.

For information about these and other exciting events, visit foodbankwma.org/events

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to our supporters thank you

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Trinity Health

Food Donations

The top food donors
between October 1 and
December 31, 2017 were:

- 1) Big Y*
- 2) C&S Wholesale Grocers
- 3) Stop & Shop*
- 4) Coca-Cola/Minute-Maid Co.
- 5) BJ's Wholesale Club*
- 6) Walmart*
- 7) Ocean State Job Lot
- 8) Atlas Farm
- 9) Plainville Farm
- 10) Costco

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