

word

our region's stand against hunger begins here.



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E-NEWS

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www.foodbankwma.org



This institution is an equal opportunity
provider, and employer.

Ending hunger together this holiday season

Nancy grew up in a family that was educated and steadily employed. After earning her master's degree, she went on to become financially independent, pursuing a career in healthcare. Then, one day, she became disabled and could no longer work. Once she realized her debilitating chronic pain was not temporary, she knew she had to do something. She applied for disability, and was promptly denied. She was so low on funds that she worried she would become homeless.

Nancy applied for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). She appreciated that these resources exist, but was hesitant to apply because she felt they were not for "people like her," who were educated and able to work.

When her modest SNAP benefits run out, she knows she can go to her local food pantry — one of two hundred such programs across western Massachusetts that receive food regularly from The Food Bank. Because of the food pantry and SNAP, she doesn't have to panic about not being able to eat.

Thanks to your support, The Food Bank is able to assist about 1,000 individuals to apply for SNAP benefits and to distribute more than 10.5 million pounds of food annually.

Our work would not be possible without the generosity of people like you who believe in our mission. By visiting foodbankwma.org and making a donation to support The Food Bank, together, we can continue to make sure that no one will have to worry about their next meal.

From all of us here at The Food Bank, we send our best wishes for blessings this holiday season. ●

Helping Hand Up



Andrew Morehouse
Executive Director

Dear Friends,

We mean it when we say that food insecurity – not knowing where your next meal may come from – can affect anyone. A natural disaster could damage your home and harm loved ones, leaving you and your community out on the streets. We have certainly witnessed this recently in

the aftermath of a series of devastating hurricanes that have struck the United States: Harvey in Texas, Irma in Florida and, most recently, Maria in Puerto Rico. Food banks do their part to assist in disasters. Food banks in each of these states (and territory, in the case of Puerto Rico) are providing millions of pounds of food and water to fellow U.S. citizens. All 200 food banks across the country are members of a national association called Feeding America, which coordinates our national food bank response to such disasters.

“...we are bracing for the imminent impact locally as many U.S. citizens from Puerto Rico are expected to move to our region at least temporarily to escape the destruction on this U.S. territory”

For our part, The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts leads a regional network called the Pioneer Valley Community Organizations Assisting in Disaster (PVCOAD). We are directly linked to a chain of command structure from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Association (MEMA) to all municipal emergency management directors across Franklin, Hampshire and Hampden counties. Given the existing large Puerto Rican population in our region, especially in Springfield and Holyoke, we are bracing for the imminent impact locally as many U.S. citizens from Puerto Rico are expected to move to our region, at least temporarily, to escape the destruction on this U.S. territory.

We know, personally, this to be true because many of our fellow staff has endured considerable emotional distress and will continue to for the foreseeable future as their relatives and friends recover and, literally, rebuild their lives. Despite this fact, all of them have continued to work with the utmost professionalism and dedication to our mission.

We have their backs and those of all our fellow citizens who will come to our area hoping for a helping hand up, especially as we approach Thanksgiving. Everyone yearns to be able to sit around the table with loved ones and break bread together with a roof over their heads. ●

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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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The Food Bank is committed to promoting cultural diversity through its board, staff, volunteers, and member agencies. This Institution is an equal opportunity provider. To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Washington, DC 20250-9410.

Mobile Food Bank expansion serves more local families

Through the support of Our Family Foundation by Stop & Shop, The Food Bank's Mobile Food Bank has continued to expand, reaching more families across the region. Five new mobile locations have launched between April and September of this year in Adams, North Adams, Chicopee, Easthampton and Westfield. Overall, the Mobile Food Bank has provided healthy food to approximately 25,000 people in the twelve month period from October 2016 to September 2017.



Congressman Richard Neal hands out heads of fresh lettuce at the new Mobile Food Bank site in Easthampton.

A Food Bank supporter, Sara Crawley, volunteered at a distribution at the new Easthampton location at Mill Park, and was impressed with the fresh local vegetables being given out. “We are very lucky to live in a region with great local agriculture,” she explains. “It is wonderful that The Food Bank is able to distribute food from local farms to families in need.”

Another supporter, Linda Pickreign, volunteered to help at the new distribution location in Westfield. “It makes me feel wonderful to play a roll in helping so many folks in need,” Linda said. “It’s all work that brings a whole community together in good ways. What a wonderful way to spend a few hours out of my day.”

For more information about how you can get involved, call The Food Bank at 413-247-9738.

Additional funding for the program is provided by C&S Wholesale Grocers, the Red Nose Day Fund and The Charles H. Farnsworth Charitable Trust. ●

Honoring the commitment of Marjorie Magner

Earlier this summer, The Food Bank was saddened to hear about the loss of our dedicated supporter, Marjorie Magner. She passed away in August at Linda Manor Assisted Living in Leeds at the age of 96.

Marjorie came to Northampton from Nebraska in 1943, where she began teaching hearing impaired children at the Clarke School for the Deaf. She earned her master's degree in Education from Smith College, and was a Fulbright Scholar from 1954 to 1955 in England, where she pursued her interest in speech, audiology and teaching deaf children. She went on to receive many honors throughout her career, including Who's Who of American Women and the A.G. Bell Association Honors Award.



Marjorie Magner

Marjorie was committed to supporting her community and raising the quality of life for all those lives she touched. So, it comes as no surprise that upon her passing, she bequested \$119,000 to The Food Bank to support our mission to feed our neighbors in need. With her gift, we can continue to strengthen our community and ensure that everyone has access to healthy food.

SNAP helps during struggling moments in life

Shannon Yaremchak has a message for lawmakers considering budget cuts to federal safety net programs like SNAP: "...it's important to keep in mind the people that are impacted. Even though food pantries can provide emergency food assistance, that [won't] sustain a family."

Shannon is a mother of four children, and was a teacher with eight years of professional experience. However, an unexpected financial setback began a series of troubling events that would radically alter their lives. Not long after her youngest son was born in 2005, her husband lost his job and was forced to return to their previous home in Kentucky to search for work. Shannon soon found herself to be a single mother not receiving financial support from her now estranged husband.

"I had nobody to watch the baby... I couldn't work," she explains. "Eventually, the landlord had to take us to court for nonpayment of rent."

By 2007, the Commonwealth placed Shannon and her children in a single motel room with two beds to escape homelessness. She was unemployed, she had no car, and was a long way from the nearest supermarket. To avoid hunger, she fed her family processed food purchased from the nearby gas station.

"If you can microwave it, that's what we ate. We developed some really unhealthy eating habits," she recalls.

Shannon applied for SNAP benefits through the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). Initially, she was denied since her husband had found work. But when it became apparent that he wasn't helping financially, DTA approved her for assistance.

Daily living in the small motel was extremely difficult. Although Shannon could buy groceries with her SNAP benefits, there was little space in their mini fridge to store them. Also, the monthly benefits weren't always enough. When they ran out, she relied on Lorraine's Soup Kitchen and Pantry in Chicopee — a member agency of The Food Bank — to feed her family. She also received support from other parents at the motel.

They eventually moved to a private three-bedroom shelter apartment in Springfield to gain more living space. But with that move came a number of other problems for the family. The neighborhood crime rate was very high, her older kids were making a long commute to school in Agawam, and she was still in need of a job.

Shannon's saving grace came when she connected with the Corporation for Public Management's Secure Jobs, a program that helps people in supportive housing to find work. The organization hired her as a teacher in their Young Parents Program. She soon received a rent voucher and secured an apartment.

"I'm proud to say that I don't have [the voucher] anymore. I no longer need it."

Shannon is currently working on a master's degree in nonprofit management and philanthropy. Her goal is to start an organization to support families experiencing the same food insecurity and homelessness that she faced.

Budget cuts to emergency assistance programs, such as SNAP, would eliminate opportunities for Shannon and others facing difficult times to stabilize their families, get back on their feet and become productive and successful contributors to the community.

"This is a moment in our lives," explains Shannon. "Being homeless doesn't define who we are." ●



The Yaremchak family

New ways to support Monte's March

Mark your calendar for November 20 & 21, as MWRSI – The River's Monte Belmonte will once again lead his annual march against hunger through the Pioneer Valley, during his Monte's March event. Joined by Congressman Jim McGovern, Food Bank Executive Director Andrew Morehouse, and a number of supporters, Monte will push a shopping cart 43 miles from Springfield to Greenfield to raise awareness and funds for our mission. Listeners can make monetary donations, with all proceeds benefitting The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. Last year, the event raised more than \$211,000.



Monte Belmonte addresses his large group of marcher during last year's Monte's March.

Here's how you can support Monte's March:

- 1. Call & Donate:** Make your donation on the days of the event by calling 1-888-323-HOPE. Volunteers will be standing by to accept your donation over the phone.
- 2. Donate Online Today:** You can make your secure online donation to Monte's March today by visiting MontesMarch.com. All donations will be counted towards the grand total at the end of The March.
- 3. Become a Monte's Marcher:** You can march with Monte by individually raising at least \$1,000 for the event. Join Monte, Congressman McGovern, and the rest of his crew for any portion of Monday and/or Tuesday's march. (Fundraisers must be at least 18 years old)
- 4. Become a Virtual Marcher:** *New this year!* If you're unable to march with Monte, but would still like to help raise funds, you can become a Virtual Marcher by creating your own fundraising page. There is no fundraising minimum.

For all the information about this year march, and to learn how to get your fundraising started, visit MontesMarch.com. ●

Thank you for raising more than \$130,000 at Will Bike 4 Food

On Sept. 24, we held our 7th annual Will Bike 4 Food charity cycling event, presented by Stop & Shop. More than 325 cyclists of all ages and experience levels braved the unseasonable 90 degree heat to participate in the event and raised more than \$130,000 to benefit The Food Bank.



"Food insecurity is a big issue in the western part of Massachusetts, and I think The Food Bank does a great job making sure that everyone is helped who is having some hard times," said 50-mile rider Robert Leavitt. "So I'm glad to do this and glad to collect donations, and it's been a great cause."

Since Will Bike 4 Food began in 2011, cyclists and supporters have raised more than \$544,000, providing the equivalent of more than 1.6 million meals to our neighbors in need.

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to our supporters
thank you

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