

Executive Director
Andrew Morehouse



Dear Friends,

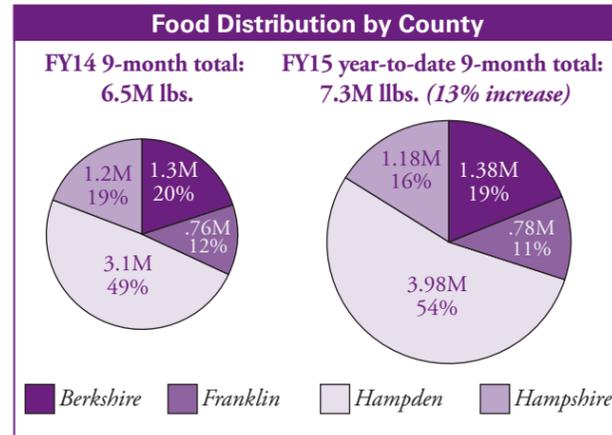
I was very fortunate to participate in a two-day workshop on “racial healing” hosted by the Healing Racism Institute of Pioneer Valley.

One may not immediately draw a connection between racism and food banking. However, the fact is that the emergency food network of local feeding programs — pantries, meal sites and shelters — has

evolved over the past three decades in such a way that it cannot meet the needs of food insecure households equitably by county and, therefore, by race. The majority of people of color in our region live in Hampden County where the average food insecure household receives the least amount of emergency food compared to the same average household in any of the other three counties of Western Massachusetts (Berkshire, Franklin and Hampshire Counties).

Although there is a large number of feeding programs in Hampden County (77), there simply isn't enough local capacity to receive, store and distribute the same level of food for people in need as in other counties. Obviously, no one intentionally set up our region's emergency food network with insufficient capacity in Hampden County. Local feeding programs generally operate on very tight budgets and rely on tremendous volunteer support. It's taken thousands of staff, volunteers and funders decades to build the incredible community network that we have today. In Hampden County, the resources needed to run a program (such as volunteers, reliable transportation, and financial support) tend to be harder to come by. For many still struggling to recover from the Great Recession, things still haven't gotten easier — particularly in Hampden County, where the population in poverty continues to climb.

What we believe matters is that we understand this geographic and racial inequity in our region's emergency food network and that we must do something about it. We are committed to providing more meals more equitably to more people in need of food assistance. In order to ensure equal access to healthy food across the region, we have begun to focus our resources on increasing the availability of emergency food in Hampden County. We have developed a plan to equalize food distribution across Western Massachusetts over the next several years. We're committed to this goal because everyone has a right to healthy food regardless of their circumstances. ●



The mission of The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts is to feed our neighbors in need and lead the community to end hunger. Published by The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, www.foodbankwma.org, info@foodbankwma.org, 413-247-9738
Executive Director, Andrew Morehouse • World of Mouth Editor, Chris Wojcik
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.



5th Annual **Will Bike 4 Food**

A ride against hunger to benefit The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts
Sunday, September 27, 2015 | The Lions Club Pavilion in Hatfield

Throughout Western Massachusetts, more than 235,000 people annually turn to the assistance of our member pantries, shelters and meal sites to help put food on the table. That's 1 in every 4 people. They include seniors, children, the newly unemployed, veterans, and working families that are struggling to make ends meet.

On Sunday, September 27, you can make a difference in the lives of those around you. Will Bike 4 Food (WB4F) is returning for its 5th year, as hundreds of riders, volunteers, and generous donors will join together to pedal towards a hunger-free community. Since the event began in 2011, WB4F has provided more than 600,000 meals to our neighbors in need.

Choose from 3.5, 10, 25, 50, or 100 mile routes designed to accommodate all ages and riding abilities. Whether you register as an individual, with your family, or as a social or business team, your participation in WB4F will help improve the lives of people in Western Massachusetts struggling with food insecurity.

What's new this year

We have grown from approximately 100 riders in 2011, to a record 250 riders at last year's event. With even more riders expected to participate this year, we have outgrown our traditional location in our Hatfield parking lot. This year, we will be moving the event to the Hatfield Lions Club Pavilion. The new location will provide us more room for more riders, vendors, entertainment and food. We're also adding a fifth route — a 3.5-mile multi surface course. Our After-Party will be the biggest yet, complete with live music from Signature Sounds artist The Sun Parade, a freestyle stunt show by Team East BMX, a cook-out from Stop & Shop, games and other entertainment for the whole family. Berkshire Brewing Company will also be returning, serving some outstanding local craft beer. For the first time, non-riders can join in the fun this year, as tickets will be sold separately for the After-Party for only \$25 (riders will not need to purchase After-Party tickets).

For complete event information, and to register, visit our website at www.willbike4food.org. And be sure to follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/WillBike4Food](https://www.facebook.com/WillBike4Food) to keep up with all of the latest event information. ●

Register Online: www.WILLBIKE4FOOD.org

HUNGER ACTION DAY

Thursday, September 3, 2015

September is Hunger Action Month. Help us kick off our month-long effort to raise awareness in support of hunger-relief. Encourage your family, friends, and coworkers to join you and don your best orange attire. Be sure to show us how you “Go Orange” by sharing your photos on Facebook or Twitter, using the hashtag #HungerAction. Businesses can get in on the action too, by encouraging your employees to go orange, conducting food or fund drives, and sharing your involvement on social media. Together, we can raise awareness of the issues of food insecurity right here in Western Massachusetts, and lead the community to end hunger.

Fork it Over for Food

Throughout the month of September at participating restaurants in Western Mass.

Since its launch in 2010, Fork it Over for Food has brought together hundreds of restaurants and patrons to raise funds which have provided meals to our neighbors in need throughout the region.

There are many ways for you to get involved this year and support our community. When you dine at one of the dozens of participating restaurants across the region, you can make a donation at the end of your meal, to support The Food Bank. Some restaurants will also be hosting special events, such as contributing a percent of sales from a specific evening, a menu item, or a signature drink.

To learn more about Fork it Over For Food, including a listing of participating restaurants, visit our website at www.foodbankwma.org.

Family Volunteer Day

Saturday, September 12 | 9 – 11:30 a.m.

All ages are welcome to our Family Volunteer Day on Saturday, September 12, where you can learn about the work that we do and support the community. It's a great way to empower all family members and teach them that their actions will make a difference in the lives of those around them. All guests will have the opportunity to choose between a number of educational and hands-on activities, such as sorting and packaging food donations, decorating bags for our Brown Bag program, learning about nutrition, touring the warehouse, and more. Space is limited for this event, so be sure to register by visiting our web site at www.foodbankwma.org.

Warehouse upgrade doubles capacity for fresh produce

The Food Bank is committed to working with our more than 231 member agencies and local feeding programs to get more healthy food to more people in our region.

In June, The Dennis Group (based in Springfield) oversaw the completion of — including generous in-kind support for — a new cooler installation in our warehouse.



Additional support was provided by a grant from Feeding America, thanks to the General Mills Foundation. The new cooler will serve as a convenient area for our member agencies to easily pick up food, and will increase our storage capacity for perishable foods (including fresh fruits, vegetables and dairy). It will also significantly reduce waste, as it will prevent wilting and spoilage.

With this additional cooler space, we will be able to obtain more perishable foods from a variety of sources, including local farmers in our region. The fresh produce is distributed to our member agencies, as well as through our Mobile Food Bank and Brown Bag: Food for Elders program. ●

Volunteer Profile: Holyoke Rehabilitation Center

Recovering life skills one can at a time

Twice a week, a group of volunteers from Holyoke Rehabilitation Center visits The Food Bank for the opportunity to work alongside our staff. The nursing facility specializes in acquired brain injuries and other neurological disorders. Vocational Specialist John Shields has been bringing this group to The Food Bank as part of the facility's program to help patients regain work skills for the past 15 years. Many patients have suffered from a stroke, head injury, or other accident and are working towards reclaiming the abilities needed to once again live independently.

The calm atmosphere of The Food Bank allows patients to work on their social skills in a safe and welcoming environment. Holyoke Rehab volunteers collaborate with other volunteer groups and Food Bank staff, in a real-world employment setting.

The volunteers gain motivation and self confidence as they witness the difference their work makes in the community. John's group also helps distribute food at our Mobile Food Bank at Beaudoin Village in Holyoke since the site began in 2013. This allows patients to meet the people receiving the food that they sorted back in our warehouse.

"Many of my people say how good it is to be on the other side helping," says John noting that many patients have been homeless or relied on food assistance in the past. "They want a job when they get out. They want to be on their own two feet."

Since Holyoke Rehabilitation Center began visiting The Food Bank in 2000, their work has provided countless meals to local families, while they themselves were in a period of recovery. Nearly 60 former patients have successfully been placed in jobs following their time at The Food Bank and many cite the skills they learned volunteering as a key factor.

to our supporters thank you

The following businesses, organizations, and foundations made a gift of \$1,000 or more between Feb. 1 and June 30, 2015

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| Aetna Foundation, Inc. | Greenfield Co-Operative Bank | Sarah Gillett Services for the Elderly, Inc. |
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SAVE THE DATE
Frid., April 29, 2016 | 6:30–10pm
 The Basketball Hall of Fame
2016 GALA
 A recipe to end hunger in Western Massachusetts

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 of Western Massachusetts
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Your name is safe. In more than 33 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 of mouth word

our region's fight against hunger begins here.



in this issue

Racial Healing and Food Banking
page 2

A Ride to End Hunger
page 3

Volunteer Profile
page 5



E-NEWS

Stay in touch with The Food Bank through our monthly e-newsletter. Sign up at foodbankwma.org



www.foodbankwma.org



A Member of

You can take action in the fight against hunger

Donate. Participate. Advocate.

Hunger exists across the country, affecting more than 49 million Americans. Currently in Western Massachusetts, more than 235,000 people annually struggle with food insecurity. Hunger affects communities all across our region—rural, urban and suburban. It is a solvable problem, and we need your help to put an end to it.

September is Hunger Action Month, a time when the Feeding America nationwide network of 200 food banks unite and asks everyone to take action to fight hunger in their community. It is your opportunity to join a movement that has a real and lasting impact on our effort to feed more people than ever before.

As individuals, charities, businesses and government, we all have a role to play in getting food to our neighbors in need. With the 30 Ways in 30 Days calendar inside, you can find a way that's right for you to make a difference by raising awareness of hunger issues, advocating for change, donating food and funds, or volunteering your time and skills. Be a hunger action hero this September and join The Food Bank in leading the community to end hunger.

To learn more about how you can take action during Hunger Action Month, visit The Food Bank's website at foodbankwma.org. ●