



The Food Bank  
of Western Massachusetts

# word of mouth

our region's fight against hunger begins here.



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**E-NEWS**

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[www.foodbankwma.org](http://www.foodbankwma.org)



## Set an extra place at your table this Thanksgiving

This Thanksgiving, while many of us will focus on food and festivities with friends and family, far too many of our children will be hungry.

Today, one in five children in Western Massachusetts struggles with hunger. For them, any day that they can go to bed on a full stomach is like Thanksgiving.

For most of us, the holiday season is a time of hope, a time of compassion, and a time to be thankful. As Americans, we understand that hunger should not exist in our region, or even our country. Nor should any child ever go hungry — especially on Thanksgiving. Yet, hunger knows no season. It feels no joy.

The solution to ending childhood hunger begins with you. By visiting our website ([www.foodbankwma.org](http://www.foodbankwma.org)) and making a donation to support The Food Bank, we can work together to feed our neighbors in need.

Please remember to mark a place for a child as your silent guest on Thanksgiving Day. With your help, many more children will have a healthy Thanksgiving dinner of their own.

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



Executive Director  
Andrew Morehouse

Dear Friends,

Is child hunger a myth? Bill O'Reilly of the O'Reilly Factor certainly thinks so and said so in early October on Fox News. We have a serious societal challenge on our hands when there are people in important positions of influence who believe that children do not go hungry in the United States of America. The fact of the matter is that there are tens of thousands of children in Western Mass. alone who go to school hungry, especially on Mondays, because there isn't adequate food at home. If you don't believe me, just ask any elementary school teacher from your local school.

*"In the last twelve months, we distributed just shy of 10 million lbs. of food — or the equivalent of 8.3 million meals."*

According to Feeding America, the national network of food banks, there are an estimated 33,580 food insecure children in our four-county region — that's one in five individuals under the age of 18. In response, we are evolving to provide more nutritious food — especially fresh produce — than ever before. We believe that everyone has a right to healthy food regardless of their circumstances. In the last twelve months, we distributed just shy of 10 million lbs. of food — or the equivalent of 8.3 million meals — the maximum amount of food that I was told our food bank could handle when I started 10 years ago. Of this total, about a fifth is fresh produce; most of it coming from local farms, including 160,000 lbs. right from our own Food Bank Farm in Hadley in partnership with Mountain View Farm.

We know that we can't food bank our way out of hunger in America. Hunger is a societal challenge that can only be solved if and when everyone comes together with the resolve to put an end to it — non-profit organizations, private businesses and local, state and federal governments. Solving hunger requires not only a moral imperative, but also the political will to rise above narrow ideological positions and values.

We also believe that there is no silver-bullet solution. Ending hunger will also require a comprehensive full-court press from many different angles, including (but not limited to) addressing job creation and workforce development, stagnant incomes, income inequality, homelessness, education, child care, transportation, health and nutrition. Over the course of the next year, we will engage in a dialogue with diverse community stakeholders across the four counties of Western Massachusetts to chart a plan of action to end hunger in the years to come. We acknowledge this is a lofty and ambitious goal, and one that may take many more years than we wish. However, we believe that we cannot be true to our mission and pragmatic in achieving it unless we hold ourselves accountable to it and do so with community-wide participation, planning and commitment. ●

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.

## Working to get more breakfast in the classroom

There is more than enough food in America to feed every man, woman and child. Yet, right here in Western Massachusetts, 1 in 5 children faces hunger. As individuals, charities, businesses and government, we all have a role to play in getting more food to our neighbors in need. In an effort to increase access to nutritious meals for thousands of children throughout Western Massachusetts, we are working to expand the Breakfast in the Classroom program throughout Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire Counties.



kids eating breakfast score  
**17.5%**  
higher on math tests

kids eating breakfast are  
**20%**  
more likely to graduate high school

Research shows that food insecure children face significant stress and challenges that can have a lasting effect on their physical, cognitive and behavioral development. Hunger affects a child's ability to learn and perform well at school. They come to school ill-prepared to learn, are more likely to have trouble focusing in class, and may struggle with complex social interactions and adapt less effectively to environmental stress. Currently, Massachusetts ranks 44 out of 50 states and the District of Columbia in school breakfast participation (according to FRAC School Breakfast Scorecard: SY2012-2013).

Breakfast in the Classroom makes breakfast available to every child, no matter the family's income level, and it's served after the opening bell. Children eat together in the classroom, enjoying nutritionally well-balanced foods like breakfast wraps, yogurt, or fruit. Students eat breakfast while the teacher takes attendance, collects homework or teaches a short lesson plan. In about 10 minutes, the meal is over and the school day continues.

According to Share our Strength (a national leader in the fight against hunger), kids who eat breakfast average 17.5% higher on math test scores, and are 20% more likely to graduate from high school.

With support from the Eos Foundation, we are working with select area schools to initiate Breakfast in the Classroom in order to increase breakfast participation to a minimum level of 80%. Increasing school breakfast participation adds 5 more meals per week to tens of thousands of children in Western Massachusetts, and provides a sustainable method of reaching children from households of lower incomes.

As a member of the Feeding America national network of food banks, we will continue to lead the community to end hunger and work with our partners who play a vital role in feeding food insecure households with children. Together we can solve hunger. ●

## 5th Annual Will Bike 4 Food raises \$100,000

On Sunday, September 27, The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts held its 5th Annual Will Bike 4 Food charity cycling event at The Lion's Club Pavilion in Hatfield. 280 riders of all ages and experience levels rode one of four different routes through the beautiful Pioneer Valley and raised \$100,000 to prevent hunger in our region.

"We are truly thankful for all of the riders, sponsors and volunteers that went the extra mile to make this event such a tremendous success," says Andrew Morehouse, Executive Director, who also rode the 100-mile course. "It is your support that has helped strengthen the emergency food network in Western Massachusetts."

This year's event drew the most team participation with 30 teams, made up of businesses, schools, friends and family. For the third straight year, Stop & Shop was not only the largest team with 26 riders, they were also the event's top team fund raiser of more than \$9,900.

All of the proceeds from Will Bike 4 Food will help us distribute much needed food to our nearly 230 member agencies, including emergency food pantries, meal sites and shelters. It will also support our numerous programs, including Brown Bag: Food for Elders, and our Mobile Food Bank. The \$100,000 raised at this annual event will enable us to provide 300,000 meals.

Will Bike 4 Food was made possible through the support of our many sponsors, including: Alekman DiTusa, Baystate Franklin Medical Center, C&S Wholesale Grocers, Cooley Dickinson Health Care, DMS, Easthampton Savings Bank, Health New England, Hits 94.3, Tighe & Bond, WHMP, WRSI, and WWLP-22 News. In addition, many in-kind donations for the event were provided by Berkshire Brewing Company, Coca-Cola, River Valley Markets, Signature Sounds, Speed & Sprocket Cycle Works, Smithsonian Caterers, Stop & Shop, Tandem Bagel Company, Team East BMX and Whole Foods Market. ●



## MONTE'S MARCH

NOVEMBER 23 & 24, 2015 • CALL 888-323-HOPE



From right to left, Monte Belmonte, Congressman James McGovern, Andrew Morehouse, and other supporters walked in the rain during last year's Monte's March.

## Monte will lead his march from Springfield to Greenfield

As WRSI-The River's radio host Monte Belmonte was making preparations for his yearly march against hunger, he decided that he wanted to take the event someplace that it had never gone before — Springfield.

Every autumn for the past five years, Monte has walked 26 miles from Northampton to Greenfield pushing a shopping cart, to raise awareness and funds for The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts in his Monte's March event. This year he will begin from St. John's Congregational Church in Springfield's Mason Square and walk to Northampton on Monday, November 23. The following day, November 24, he will continue along his traditional route from Northampton to Greenfield. The two-day event will stretch more than 43 miles across three counties.

Last year, the event raised more than \$66,000 for The Food Bank, exceeding Monte's goal of \$56,000. Over the past five years, Monte's March has raised a total of \$243,000, providing the equivalent of 729,000 meals to individuals in our region experiencing food insecurity.

Joining him on his walk once again will be one of the country's strongest hunger advocates in Washington, Congressman James McGovern, and The Food Bank's Executive Director, Andrew Morehouse.

"It is very inspiring to witness our community rally behind Monte's March each year," explains Morehouse. "Not only does it provide us with more resources to distribute more food to more people, but it also allows us to educate more people about the challenges we face moving forward."

Throughout their march, you can make a donation to The Food Bank by calling 1-800-323-HOPE, or online by visiting The Food Bank's website at [www.foodbankwma.org](http://www.foodbankwma.org). ●

## Local farms increase access to nutritious food

Each year, local farms allow The Food Bank to distribute more wholesome, nutritious food throughout our region through our numerous programs. In fact, in the last twelve months, more than half of the 2.3 million pounds of produce that we distributed came from Pioneer Valley farmers. With the need for emergency food continuing to increase, we rely on our many community partners to help us feed our neighbors in need.

One such supporter is Atlas Farm in South Deerfield. A long-time supporter of The Food Bank, Atlas Farm has donated more than 350,000 pounds of fresh vegetables since 2007.

Atlas Farm started on a small plot of land in 2004 by Gideon Porth, who (at the time) was a recent graduate of the University of Massachusetts Amherst's graduate program in plant and soil sciences. Since that time, Atlas Farm's business has been growing. What started as three acres of land, has since expanded to become an 85-acre organic farm, including retail farm store sales and their Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm shares.

At least once a week, The Food Bank visits Atlas Farm to pick up a variety of organic produce, including kale, squash, potatoes, beets, peppers and cabbage. We distribute this healthy produce to families, children and seniors throughout Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire Counties through our member agencies, as well The Food Bank's own Brown Bag: Food for Elders and Mobile Food Bank programs.

"The Food Bank is lucky to be situated in the heart of a thriving agricultural valley," says Lisa Limont, Food Procurement Specialist at The Food Bank. "Our relationships with area farmers, such as Gideon, strengthen community ties for both The Food Bank and the farmers. In many cases, farmers donate produce they would not be able to sell for a variety of market reasons, even though the food is perfect."

Not only do the donations from supporters such as Atlas Farm provide more nutritious food to some of the area's most vulnerable populations, it also allows us to use our limited resources to purchase other necessary foods throughout the entire year. Working together with our local farms, we will continue to strengthen the roots of the emergency food network and ensure that everyone has access to healthy food, regardless of their circumstances. ●



*Howard Henry, an employee at Atlas Farm, cleans off some fresh vegetables harvested from the fields in South Deerfield.*

# donor profile

As a former school teacher in Rochester, NY, Lucy Tirk has always had a deep-seeded interest in the well-being of children. Her job there allowed her to see, first-hand, the daily struggles faced by kids without a secure family life. These were the same kids that would turn 18 and not know how to cook for themselves in a healthy way, and who relied on processed and prepared foods.



*Northampton residents David and Lucy Tirk.*

Limited financial resources at home may mean a child's nutrition is compromised. Parents who work multiple jobs are more likely to rely on prepared, restaurant or fast food. Research has shown that when youth are involved in preparing their own food, they are more likely to eat nutrient-dense foods, including fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

Now in Northampton, Lucy and her husband David support The Food Bank and continue to be personally concerned about food insecurity in Western Massachusetts, and — more specifically — how people eat.

"There is no education system to teach kids in school about food and where it comes from," explains Lucy. "They simply don't know how to shop or cook. They aren't able to care for themselves."

At The Food Bank, we also feel that it is important to teach the necessary skills to buy and cook food that has positive effects on health. In addition to our existing nutrition education for adults, beginning in 2016 we will be launching a new hands-on cooking program for kids to teach them basic cooking skills and food literacy. This program will create an environment where healthy food is fun, celebrated and accessible. Most importantly, area youth will gain the knowledge and skills they need to make informed choices around food. ●

A screenshot of the website for The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. The header includes the organization's logo, social media icons, a search bar, and a 'Translate' button. Below the header are navigation links: 'Who We Are', 'What We Do', 'Member Agencies', 'News', and 'Contact'. A prominent purple bar contains buttons for 'GET HELP', 'GET INVOLVED', 'DONATE', and 'LEARN'. The main content area features a photograph of volunteers in a warehouse setting, with the text 'FEED, LEAD, STRENGTHEN' overlaid. Below the photo is a quote: 'The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts is committed to feeding our neighbors in need and leading the community to end hunger.' At the bottom of the screenshot, there is a green box with white text: 'If you've visited The Food Bank's web site recently, then you've probably noticed we made some changes. The new site, launched in August, has been streamlined to make it simple to find what you need. Whether you're looking for food assistance, or for ways to support The Food Bank, the redesigned tools will make your experience effortless. Visit us at www.foodbankwma.org'.

to our supporters  
**thank you**

The following businesses, organizations,  
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**Gala 2016:**

**A Recipe to End Hunger**

*Honorary Chair Charles D'Amour, Big Y CEO, invites you to mark your calendar for **Friday, April 29, 2016**, as The Food Bank will be holding our biennial gala event at The Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield. In addition to sampling food and beverages from the region's top chefs and restaurants, guests can participate in a silent and a live auction to bid on unique items and packages. There will also be live music and dancing. All proceeds from the Gala will benefit The Food Bank.*

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