

# of mouth word

our region's stand against hunger begins here.



in  
this  
issue

**Unified For  
Change**  
page 2

**Agency Spotlight**  
page 4

**Farm to Cocktail  
Competition**  
page 5



#### E-NEWS

Stay in touch with  
The Food Bank  
through our monthly  
e-newsletter. Sign up  
at [foodbankwma.org](http://foodbankwma.org)



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



This institution is an equal opportunity  
provider, and employer.

## Task Force to End Hunger announces action plan

In January 2016, The Food Bank gathered more than two dozen community partners to develop a plan to end hunger in our region. In addition to meeting monthly, this Task Force to End Hunger also held a series of open community forums in each of the four counties to collaborate with various stakeholders and community residents, and collect their input.

Through these discussions and collective research, The Task Force has identified three priority areas they believe will move the needle toward ending hunger in western Massachusetts:

1. Erase the stigma associated with hunger,
2. Develop a mechanism to provide integrated services for those who need them, and
3. Address issues related to public policy.

Led by The Food Bank, the first step in the implementation of this new action plan will begin this spring, in partnership with the Holyoke Health Center. Care providers will screen pediatric patients and their families for food insecurity at the health center. If determined to be food insecure, their doctor will refer them to The Food Bank, where they will be connected with the necessary resources.

*continued on page 3*

*Pictured above: Congressman Jim McGovern addresses the crowd at the Task Force to End Hunger's Franklin County Community Forum, held at Greenfield Community College in June 2016.*



Executive Director  
Andrew Morehouse

Dear Friends,

We've all heard the phrase ...

“When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” I’ve been thinking about this a lot lately, especially as final reports streamed in from our 200 local feeding partners, revealing that they experienced a combined average of 146,460 monthly

visits. This upward trend from the previous year confirms that life is getting tougher for the most vulnerable in our communities.

I am heartened, however, by the resolve of those who are more fortunate to band together to do something about it. Last November’s Monte’s March raised \$211,000. More importantly, a community spirit in the air prevailed unlike any previous year. Marchers brainstormed ways to take matters into their own hands to do something about hunger, regardless of what government does or doesn’t do. To this end, we have invited all the marchers to The Food Bank this spring to continue the conversation and discuss what else we can do together.

During the March, I had a moving conversation with a supporter. He explained that, “I’m one of the lucky ones who’s been able to give back.” He shared that he lost his job in 2008 during the Great Recession. Eventually, a friend got him a job as a mechanic at a local farm. He wasn’t able to collect Massachusetts unemployment because his last job had been out of state. He worked at that farm for three and a half years. The Amherst Survival Center, and by extension The Food Bank, literally kept him fed when his choices were slim and difficult. Through sheer luck, he had a chance meeting with an old friend who helped land him a job in his previous occupational field.

“I still have that job today,” he explained. “Today I eagerly donated to The Food Bank by way of Monte’s March because it works in a real and demonstrable fashion. The Food Bank is an effective, valid and necessary resource for our community. I remain incredibly grateful for the helping hand it extended me when I needed it.”

While it was reassuring to hear this, I couldn’t help but think that society and the economy failed him and hundreds of thousands of people in our region who go hungry. More often than not, food-insecure households live in a constant state of emergency. This is why we are determined to take concrete steps to confront hunger in our region and achieve our vision of a western Massachusetts where no one goes hungry and everyone has access to nutritious food. ●

---

*“The Food Bank is an effective, valid and necessary resource for our community. I remain incredibly grateful for the helping hand it extended me when I needed it”*

---

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](http://www.foodbankwma.org), [info@foodbankwma.org](mailto:info@foodbankwma.org), 413-247-9738

Executive Director, Andrew Morehouse • Word of Mouth Editors, Chris Wojcik and Sarah Tsitso • Contributing Writer, Lillian Baulding

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.



*The Food Bank is working with 23 schools in nine districts to help bring breakfast to the classroom.*

## Bringing breakfast to the classroom

The expression “breakfast is the most important meal of the day” has never been truer than when it comes to children trying to make it through a school day. Research shows that hunger affects a child’s ability to learn and perform well in school. This is why The Food Bank works with Eos Foundation to bring the Breakfast in the Classroom program to schools throughout our region.

The federally-funded program provides free breakfast to every child after the morning bell, regardless of their families’ income level, helping to erase the stigma associated with free meals. Students eat nutritionally well-balanced food together in the classroom, as the teacher takes attendance, collects homework, or even teaches a short lesson.

“When we first heard about Breakfast in the Classroom, I was admittedly very reluctant,” said John Breish, principal at Lt. Clayre Sullivan Elementary School in Holyoke (pre-k – 8). “I thought it was going to distract us from the most important work that we were doing at the school. I have been pleasantly surprised. It has been a great addition to our school and taken away nothing from what we do here.”

In the 2015–16 school year, The Food Bank worked with nine schools in four districts — where at least 60% of the students qualified for free or reduced-price lunches — to help initiate the program. Through our efforts, we provided students with access to more than 544,100 breakfasts. Currently, we are working with 23 schools in nine districts. By the end of this school year, we will have provided access to 1,787,580 additional healthy breakfasts.

“Breakfast in the Classroom has been working out really well,” said Alanna Bernstein, a 4th and 5th grade teacher at Lt. Clayre Sullivan school. “The kids like the breakfasts a lot. There have been very few breakfasts that they’ve passed up. They pretty much want it all ... all the time. It has been a great resource and a great tool for the classroom for the kids.” ●

## Task Force continued from page 1

Food Bank staff will work closely with families to identify the most appropriate services. This may include applying for SNAP benefits, access to nutrition education, and/or locating food assistance in their own communities (including food pantries, emergency meal sites, or The Food Bank’s own Brown Bag; Food for Elders program or Mobile Food Banks). This assistance and case work will extend beyond The Food Bank. Families will also be referred to other agencies that can help with issues related to housing, job training, and other wrap-around services.

Funding for this program will be supported by an Innovation Planning grant through the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, which was awarded to The Food Bank in February.

The full version of The Task Force’s action plan was released during a press conference on March 3, supported by Congressmen James McGovern and Richard Neal. The action plan is available on The Food Bank’s web site at [www.foodbankwma.org/special-initiatives](http://www.foodbankwma.org/special-initiatives).

## St. John's Food pantry makes feeding people its primary obligation

On the damp, drizzly Wednesday following this year's Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, the line of people waiting for groceries was longer than usual at the St. John's Congregational Church Food Pantry in the Mason Square neighborhood of Springfield. For most, it was their only chance to put food on the table.

As a member agency of The Food Bank, St. John's receives food from us which makes up the bulk of the items they distribute. Over the years, we have provided on-going support, including member agency technical assistance and the purchase of a special software license to help them track client visits. Additionally, The Food Bank helped forge a relationship between St. John's and Stop & Shop, allowing the pantry to receive regular donations of frozen foods directly from the grocer.

Mason Square lies within a region referred to as a food desert. The impoverished area lacks adequate access to fresh produce and other healthful whole foods largely due to a lack of a full-line grocery store, farmers' markets, and healthy food providers. To compound the problem, many low-income residents in Mason Square lack the transportation to get to supermarkets that are located miles away.

To address this critical issue, St. John's works with other Springfield churches as part of the Mason Square Network, so that food insecure households' needs are met. Along with local social service agencies (including The Food Bank), the network is looking toward a future where all Mason Square residents will have ready access to healthy, affordable food. The city of Springfield is still trying to attract a supermarket operator to locate to a site in this neighborhood. In the meantime, St. John's staff and volunteers work hard to provide their clients with the food they need.

"A young mother with six children lost her refrigerator and all its contents," recalls Kathy Henry, volunteer intake coordinator for the pantry. "She had no money to replace the food or feed her children. She was in a panic because she wasn't sure if she had to meet certain criteria in order to get some food. It was gratifying to explain to her that this type of situation is our primary obligation — to feed God's people in need." ●



*Volunteers at St. John's Congregational Church Food Pantry begin to organize food for distribution to the community.*



### Monte's March raises more than \$211,000

For the seventh straight year, WRSI–The River's Monte Belmonte led a group of community supporters, political representatives, and business leaders through the streets of the Pioneer Valley to raise money and awareness for hunger in our community. When all the donations were finally counted, Monte's March raised over \$211,000 to support The Food Bank's efforts to feed the more than 223,000 food insecure people in our region.

"I felt like I had the wind knocked out of me for the last two weeks when I heard about the election," Belmonte said to the large crowd that had gathered at the end of the march. "But I feel like I got my wind back, with all of you folks reminding me of what kind of community we live in." ●



## Local bartenders compete to support our mission

Mark your calendar and plan to join us for our Farm to Cocktail event, a straight up bartending competition to benefit The Food Bank. Some of the area's most creative bartenders will compete as they shake, stir and dash delectable cocktails using ingredients sourced from local farms. Not only will you have a chance to sample all of their concoctions, but you'll also vote for your favorite.

Enjoy fresh and hearty hors d'oeuvres and desserts provided by Wheelhouse Farm Truck & Catering. They cook with the seasons, sourcing ingredients from local farms when they are at their peak deliciousness, and make everything from scratch.

### How the cocktail competition works

Six local bartenders will be given a variety of spirits to choose from as well as several ingredients from local farms. They'll have a couple of weeks to experiment and perfect their cocktail.

On the day of the event, guests will sample each of the cocktail creations and vote for their favorite. The overall favorite will be awarded the "People's Choice." The top two will move on to the next round of the competition and be given a "mystery ingredient" they must use to craft a cocktail in less than two minutes. A special panel of judges will sample the mystery cocktails and announce the cocktail competition champion.

### Purchase your tickets today

Space for this event is limited, and tickets are expected to sell out. You can reserve your place now by purchasing your tickets online at [www.farmtococktail.org](http://www.farmtococktail.org). ●

#### WHEN:

Thurs., May 4, 2017  
5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

#### WHERE:

Quonquot Farm  
9 North St., Whately, MA

#### COST:

\$45 per person  
\$35 for designated drivers

#### PURCHASE TICKETS:

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

#### 21+ ONLY

Valid ID required

## Breakfast at The Bank

You're invited to join us for a special tour of our facility to learn how your support makes it possible to feed more than 223,000 neighbors in need.

Breakfast at The Bank is a series of tours and educational programs, each focusing on a different area of food insecurity and how you can help end hunger in our region.

All events take place at The Food Bank (97 North Hatfield Road, Hatfield, MA), from 8:30 – 9:30 a.m.

Light continental breakfast will be provided.

Reserve your place now by contacting Janine Papesh at [janinep@foodbankwma.org](mailto:janinep@foodbankwma.org), or by calling (413) 992-6262.

### April 6, 2017

Advocating to End Hunger

### May 4, 2017

Connecting Food & Health through Nutrition

### June 1, 2017

Volunteer Opportunities

### September 7, 2017

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

### October 5, 2017

Breakfast In the Classroom

### November 2, 2017

Senior Hunger

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Permit Number 444  
Springfield, MA



P.O. Box 160  
Hatfield, MA 01038

# thank you to our supporters

**The following businesses, organizations, and foundations made a gift of \$1,000 or more between October 1 and December 31, 2016**

Action for Boston Community Development	Enterprise Rent-A-Car Foundation	Performance Food Group
Aetna Foundation, Inc.	Ernst Financial Services	Pioneer Cold
Amelia Peabody Charitable Fund	Fair Share Foundation	Prentice Foundation, Inc
Avangrid Foundation	Fallon Community Health Plan	Richard E Neal for Congress Committee
Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Inc.	Farm Credit East Cares	River Valley Market LLC
Berkshire Brewing Company Inc	BJ's Share A Meal	S.L. Gimbel Foundation Fund
Bill Newman Radio Show	Ford Fund and Motor Company	The Silver Tie Fund, Inc.
Bob's Discount Furniture Charitable Foundation, Inc.	Four Seasons Wine & Liquor	Six Flags New England
C&S Charities Inc.	Frederick E. Weber Charities Corp.	Sodexo Foundation
Caroline Blanton Thayer Charitable Trust	Goggins Real Estate	St. John's Episcopal Church
Chicopee Savings Charitable Foundation	Green Fields & McCusker's Co-op Markets	Stock Gumshoe
Citizens Bank	Greenfield Savings Bank	Sunderland Elementary School
Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage	HAP, Inc	Szawlowski Potato Farms
Community Health Charities	Health New England	TD Charitable Foundation
Cornucopia Foods	Highland Street Foundation	Thornes Marketplace
CTE Maura Healy	Howat Family Foundation	TJX Foundation, Inc.
Delta Sand and Gravel, Inc	HUB International Limited	UMass Memorial Health Care, Inc.
Dr. Hauschka Skin Care, Inc.	I.L. Cohen Foundation	Unitarian Universalist Society of Greater Springfield
Easthampton Savings Bank Foundation, Inc	Joe Kennedy For Congress	United Personnel Services
Emergency Food and Shelter Program	Joy In Childhood Foundation, Inc.	United Way of Pioneer Valley
	Ledgeways Charitable Trust	Veritas Technologies LLC
	Linde Family Foundation	ShopRite Partners in Caring
	MassMutual Impact Fund	Weber & Grinnell Insurance
	MGM Resorts International	Yankee Candle Company
	Mutton & Mead Medieval Festival	Yawkey Foundation
	Fitness Together	