

NOURISHING NEWS

FROM THE GREATER BERKS FOOD BANK

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World Food Day Breakfast

A “fresh” message was delivered to the 230 friends of the Greater Berks Food Bank who attended our 34th annual World Food Day Breakfast at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on October 19.

Peg Bianca, GBFB’s Executive Director, informed the crowd that in the three years since we moved into our new facility, we have increased the percentage of fresh, refrigerated and frozen foods we distribute annually to more 52 percent as compared to the 30 percent we distributed in the last year before our move. “We are not simply a dried food and canned storage warehouse. Where we once only had 170 pallets of storage area for fresh food, we now have 500 pallets.” Peg also highlighted the efforts of our expanding Mobile Market program to effectively and quickly distribute these perishable foods to the families that so desperately need it (see related article).

To take our commitment to providing fresh and healthy foods to the hungry further, the GBFB formed a Foods to Encourage Committee in March of this year. The committee, comprised of professionals from the health fields as well GBFB staff and Board members, helped establish the policies and standards by which donated foods will be rated for nutritional value. The committee’s work will help member agencies in selecting foods to order; ultimately, placing healthier foods onto the plates of our neighbors in need.

For their contributions this year, the Foods to Encourage Committee was presented with the 22nd annual Jim and Anna Connors Volunteerism Award. Members of the committee included: Jen Bauman, Berks Community Health Center; Heather Boyer, Reading Recreation Commission; Courtney Dixon and Carly Litzel, both from Tower Health; Lori Michaels, Lori’s Angels; Victoria Kintzer and Josh Weiss, GBFB Board Members; and Lori Lowery, Deb Mest and Jasmine Rodriquez, from the GBFB Agency & Volunteer Services Department.

The GBFB was also honored to have U.S. Representative Ryan Costello address the audience (photo). Congressman Costello, who has supported legislation to combat food insecurity domestically and internationally, said food insecurity is often an invisible issue that requires advocacy and greater public awareness. He commended the GBFB for meeting this challenge and specifically for providing food to children so they can have energy to be prepared to learn.

Thank you to all who attended the Breakfast and to all those who supported it through financial contributions.



The Greater Berks Food Bank would like to especially thank the Breakfast’s Gold Sponsor

M&T Bank

There is still time to help us meet the match!

A generous local couple is donating \$1 for every \$4 donated by new donors throughout 2017.

They will donate up to \$25,000 to the GBFB. If you have never donated, please consider doing so today. If you are a loyal supporter, please encourage your friends and family to help us meet the match!



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A copy of the official registration and financial
information of the Greater Berks Food Bank may be
obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State
by calling toll-free within Pennsylvania 1-800-732-0999.
Registration does not imply endorsement.

From the Executive Director



From our family
to yours,

*Happy
Holidays!*

36th annual Reading Berks CROP Walk

This year's 36th annual Reading-Berks CROP Walk gathered more than 400 people from 40 local churches who walked at Gring's Mill Recreation Area to raise funds and awareness for the issue of hunger here at home and abroad. More than \$25,000 was raised – with 25% of the proceeds being donated to the GBFB and the other 75%

to Church World Services to help their international humanitarian efforts. Since its first year, the CROP Walk has raised more than \$1 million. The church with the most youth participants receives the Funky Flip Flop Award and this year the honor went to St. Paul's UCC of Fleetwood!



We're now on instagram!

Remember to follow us on Facebook and on our new Instagram account for daily photo, event, and acknowledgment updates!

Follow us online
@greaterberksfoodbank



Mobile Markets keep rolling out the healthy foods to Berks and Schuylkill!

Two Schuylkill County sites to remain open throughout winter!

First established in spring 2016 with the generous support of a \$150,000 grant (payable over 3 years) from Giant Food Stores' Our Family Foundation, the GBFB's Mobile Market Program, and its Mobile Direct Program, both saw amazing growth in 2017.

In this, our second year of the programs, more than 130,000 pounds of nourishing foods were distributed directly to families in need by GBFB staff and volunteers at our seven monthly Mobile Market sites. Additionally, through our Mobile Direct Program, established side-by-side with our Mobile Markets in 2016, we delivered an extra 390,000 pounds of fresh and frozen foods this year to nearly 60 low-income senior residential facilities in our two counties. This healthy food helped nourish thousands of our struggling senior neighbors – a group so susceptible to the ill effects of hunger and malnutrition.

In the past year, the two programs combined served fresh and frozen healthy foods to 5,800 households. Foods distributed include an array of fresh and wonderful fruits and vegetables, as well as frozen meats, dairy products, and breads and bakery items.

The Mobile Market visits five outside sites monthly - from April through October - throughout

Berks County - 11th & Pike Playground, Reading; Berks Community Health Center at Oakbrook Homes, Reading; Wernersville; Leesport; and Gouglersville - as well as two sites in Schuylkill County: Auburn and Mahanoy City. The Leesport, Gouglersville and Mahanoy City sites were all new for 2017. The 11th & Pike Playground site was relocated from a previous city location.

We are happy to report that our two Schuylkill County Mobile Market sites – Auburn and Mahanoy City – will be able to stay open (and serving families!) over the winter. Thank you to the Auburn Borough Hall and Humane Steam Fire Company, Mahanoy City, for generously opening your doors to our program this winter!

Thank you also to all of the loyal GBFB volunteers who work side-by-side with GBFB staff to make each Mobile Market happen. We look forward to a new Mobile Market season in 2018!



GBFB earns 4-star Charity Navigator rating

Late this summer, we were proud and honored to be notified that we earned a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator – the country's premier charity evaluator! This is their highest possible rating and indicates that the Greater Berks Food Bank adheres to sector best practices and executes its mission in a financially efficient way (with an emphasis on accountability and transparency) while exceeding industry standards and outperforming most charities in our area of work. The 4-star rating is awarded to less than 25% of the charities that Charity Navigator evaluates.

The 4-star rating is also a wonderful reassurance for you, our donors. For all those who donate, thank you, and please realize your investment in helping us feed the hungry is so appreciated and put to the best and most effective use possible.



Agency Feature: Ringtown Food Pantry

In 2007, Suzie Drukker and her husband were living in New Jersey. Over the years, the couple noticed a tremendous need for food support in their hometown of Ringtown, Schuylkill County, where Suzie's mother still lived. The pair decided that the best way to see change happen was to create it. Suzie contacted her mother and within a few months opened the first food pantry in Ringtown. Suzie and her husband moved back shortly thereafter to assist her mother in running the growing three-room pantry.

In 2009, the Ringtown Food Pantry had grown so much that the township offered them use of the Union Township Building. The move provided much more space; however, having a pantry located on the second floor presented its own difficulties.



After witnessing the great effect the pantry had on their rural community, the township built a new food storage area on the first floor and donated three refrigerators and seven freezers to help accommodate the flowing donations.

Today, more than fifty community families are provided with food each month. "Knowing that you're helping those that need help is really rewarding," said Suzie. "And seeing the graduates who are able to make it and move on; they don't need us anymore, God bless them," she remarked.

Ringtown Food Pantry has been a member agency of the Greater Berks Food Bank since 2011. In the past year, the GBFB has supplied more than 54,000 pounds of food (valued at nearly \$85,000), including Senior Food Totes for low-income seniors, to the Ringtown Food Pantry. The Pantry is also a member agency of Schuylkill Community Action from which they receive federal and state foods.

Suzie spoke of the pantry's future plans to move to a location with an emergency food kitchen and a walk-in freezer and cooler. "We are hoping to make the move in a year. There's a lot that goes into a move like this so we are doing our best to make it happen soon."

Weekender Program expands!

Two new sites in Schuylkill and one in Berks added for this school year.

About twenty years ago, a school nurse in an impoverished elementary school in Arkansas noticed more and more of her children were showing up for school on Monday morning feeling sick and weak. After asking them a couple questions, she quickly realized the reason they felt so was because they had not had a decent meal since their school lunch the previous Friday. Wanting to help the in-need young children of her school to stay nourished over the weekend, the nurse teamed up with her local food bank and started sending the students home with a backpack filled with non-perishable foods to eat over the weekends. The nurse started seeing far less complaints of not feeling well on Mondays, and the children showed up for school feeling good and ready to learn.

News of the program spread throughout the Feeding America network of food banks and, by early 2004, the Greater Berks Food Bank piloted its first "Weekender Program" site. Through the hard-work and guidance of our Agency Services Department, the GBFB

has been able to consistently grow the Weekender Program through the years, allowing us to keep more and more young children properly fed over the weekends. Today, as many as 1,700 elementary school students go home with a bag filled with food each Friday after school.

The GBFB was excited to be able to add three more elementary schools to our roster of Weekender Program sites for this school year: Tamaqua Elementary School and Minersville Area Elementary Center, both in Schuylkill County; and Perry Elementary School (Hamburg Area School District) in Berks County. In total, we now support nineteen Weekender Program sites – ten in Berks and nine in Schuylkill.

We have a lot of people to thank for allowing us to expand this program so effectively over the years. Thank you to the volunteers who now help us pack every bag each Tuesday morning in our warehouse. Thank you to the school site coordinators who oversee their school's weekly distribution, as well as all the school volunteers

who help hand the bags out. Finally, an especially grateful thank you to you, our donors. It is only because of your financial generosity that we have been able to expand this impactful program so much through the years.



GBFB volunteers packing the weekly bags

Scouting for Food

This year marked the 31st annual Scouting for Food event hosted by the Boy Scouts of America – Hawk Mountain Council. On Saturday, November 4, the Boy Scouts hung door hangers on the houses within our community inviting residents to leave non-perishable food items in a bag by their front door the upcoming Saturday. The following week, the Boy Scouts



collected all donations and presented them to the Greater Berks Food Bank.

GBFB is so grateful to the Hawk Mountain Council for their amazing annual effort. This year, 54,000 pounds of non-perishable food items were collected by the Hawk Mountain Council and donated to the GBFB. Thank you to the Boy Scouts and to all community members who donated to Scouting for Food!

We thank the following businesses, organizations and places of worship that recently hosted food and fund drives*:

- 🍌 16th & Haak Elementary School, Reading
- 🍌 Adelphia Seafood
- 🍌 Baker Tilly Virchow Krause LLP
- 🍌 Barrer & White Orthodontists
- 🍌 Berks County Bicycle Club
- 🍌 Berks Visiting Nurse Association
- 🍌 Boscov's Department Stores
- 🍌 East Penn Manufacturing
- 🍌 Hamburg Area Middle School
- 🍌 Health Calls Home Health Agency
- 🍌 Morgan Stanley Smith Barney
- 🍌 Mt. Zion Lutheran Church
- 🍌 Reform Congregation Oheb Shalom
- 🍌 Reading Berks Assoc. of Realtors
- 🍌 Reading Royals Hockey
- 🍌 Royer's Flowers
- 🍌 Santander Arena & Performing Arts Center
- 🍌 St. Mark's U.C.C.
- 🍌 Tau Delta Phi Fraternity, Kutztown U.
- 🍌 Thrivent Financial
- 🍌 Wyomissing Public Library

* Food drives of at least 100 lbs. and fund drives of at least \$100 from 7/1/17 to 11/17/17

4th annual Cranksgiving



If you made your way out Route 10 toward Trooper Thorn's Irish Beef House on October 28, you might have noticed a hoard of very determined bicyclers dressed in wacky Halloween costumes riding along the road. What you were witnessing was the Berks County Bicycle Club's Cranksgiving food drive. This year, the Club hosted the fourth annual Cranksgiving food drive in which more than 60 participants rode miles to various grocery stores with a grocery list of Thanksgiving foods. The participants used their own money to purchase as much from the list as they liked, jumped on their bikes with their groceries, and rode to the next store.

All purchases were donated to GBFB to help feed the hungry during the holidays. This year, more than 2,600 pounds of food (including 1,200 pounds of frozen turkeys) were donated - breaking last year's record by more than 200 pounds!

Smithfield Foods donates 38,000 pounds of pork!

In 2008, Smithfield Foods began their "Helping Hungry Homes" campaign in an effort to put an end to hunger in our nation. Each year, Smithfield teams up with retail grocers to donate protein to food banks across the United States in hopes of supplying more substantial and nutritious foods to those in need. This September, Smithfield, in partnership with Weis Markets, donated 38,000 pounds of pork ribs to GBFB to help end hunger in Berks and Schuylkill Counties. This amount of pork provided hundreds of families and individuals with hearty, delicious food.



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About Our Organization . . .
 The Greater Berks Food Bank, established in 1983, collects, purchases, stores, and distributes over seven million pounds of food annually to the more than 300 programs which feed the hungry in Berks & Schuylkill counties.



Ways you can help

Does your employer have a matching gift program?

The impact of your generosity can be doubled – or even tripled – when donations are matched by your company. Do not let these “free” dollars go untapped when they could help us feed even more of our hungry neighbors. Please ask your personnel manager if your company will match your donation to the GBFB. Some even match gifts made by their retirees and/or spouses. Just mail the completed matching gift form your employer provides along with your donation. We will do the rest.

Consider including the GBFB in your estate plans.

A planned gift can be especially meaningful because it provides long term support that strengthens our ability to meet future challenges in the fight against hunger. You can make a lasting gift that will meet a basic need by providing nutritious food to families who would otherwise struggle to put meals on the table all while providing possible tax benefits to you and your family. For example, you can leave a bequest in your will, add the Greater Berks Food Bank as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy, give a gift of retirement assets or set up a charitable gift annuity. Please consult with your estate planning attorney and financial advisor.

Thanksgiving turkeys!



We received a total of 780 frozen turkeys from C&S Wholesaler Grocers and Giant Food Stores this past November. The frozen turkeys were distributed by the GBFB to families at our Mobile Markets, and the food pantries we supply, across Berks and Schuylkill Counties. They were also provided to more than a dozen member agencies that provided Thanksgiving community meals for those in need. We could not be more appreciative for such large donations as the holiday season approached. Because of these donations, and others who donated additional turkeys, hundreds of local families could provide delicious meals to their loved ones during this special time of year.

Thank you to C&S, Giant and all others who donated turkeys this Thanksgiving!

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