Developing the School Pantry Program

Community FOOD BANK of Eastern Oklahoma
Dear Friend:

One of my favorite quotes states that true generosity is exemplified by planting trees under whose shade you never expect to sit. In the context of the Food Bank, perhaps it should read “Generosity is feeding people you never expect to meet.” Feeding children especially fits this adage—we may not personally see them reach their full potential, but we know how important it is to all of us for them to get there.

In this issue you will read about the persistent issue of hunger amongst students, and how it adversely impacts their efforts in the classroom. For the last ten years, this Food Bank and many others have provided backpacks to food insecure students so that they still have access to food over the weekends. New school pantries offer an effective option for older students, recognizing the more advanced life skills of teens and reducing waste by offering healthy choices.

These young people will hopefully grow up healthier and be more productive citizens as a result of being fed. They will almost certainly have more hope and confidence, knowing that in this great big world, people they don’t even know believe that they matter.

I so appreciate people who share their time, their money and lend their voices to the hungry in our communities—people like you. I hope that 2016 is a wonderful year for you and your family.

On behalf of the hungry,

Eileen Ryan Bradshaw
Executive Director

“\text{We care about families who are hungry and didn't know how to help. Then we found the Food Bank. Now we give what we can every month.}” –Susan, Food Bank Breadwinner.

Many thanks to our Breadwinners. With a membership of almost 200, Breadwinners provide stable monthly donations to help feed families every day of the year.

Joining is easy. To get started or learn more, contact Justin Jones at 918-936-4556 or jjones@okfoodbank.org.
Grant funding provides critical support

The Food Bank recently received a generous grant from the Bank of America Charitable Foundation. This support will help provide 100,000 meals to eastern Oklahomans struggling with hunger.

Over the years, Bank of America has helped fight hunger not only through grant funding but also through cause marketing campaigns and matching employee gifts. One of the foundation’s main funding priorities is Hunger Relief and we are grateful for their partnership and continued support.

Thank you to all the foundations, corporations and programs that support the Food Bank’s mission by providing necessary support. Below is a list of grant requests funded from September 15, 2015-November 30, 2015 and the critical programs they support:

$1,000-$5,000
- Cuesta Foundation  General Operations • Cox Charities  Food for Kids • TJX Foundation  General Operations
- Scripps Howard Foundation | KJRH Channel 2  Produce Project • Sodexo Foundation  Food for Kids: Backpack Program

$5,001-$10,000
- Feeding America thanks to the Red Nose Day Fund  Food for Kids: Backpack Program

$10,001+
- Bank of America Charitable Foundation  General Operations • Spirit AeroSystems Good Neighbor Fund  Food for Kids

If your company or organization has grant opportunities you would like us to know about, please contact Fran Bevel at 918-936-4509 or fbevel@okfoodbank.org.

SAVE THE DATE!

“When businesses provide avenues for their employees to volunteer, they get back much more than what they give,” said Eric Kunkel, partner at CCK Strategies. “Most employees want to contribute to their community, and involving them actually increases retention and productivity.”

In the spirit of the upcoming season of the heart, area businesses are proving they have a “heart for the hungry” by supporting the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma.

In an effort lead by CCK Strategies, the goal is to help emphasize feeding those struggling with hunger in our community. Businesses are encouraged to host a food and fund drive or schedule a day for their employees to team build by volunteering.

A Heart for the Hungry campaign kick-off breakfast is being planned for January 28, 2016. To learn more about how your organization can participate in Heart of the Hungry, contact Heidi Ewing at hewing@okfoodbankorg or 918-936-4544.

Mark your calendar for Empty Bowls 2016, presented by the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation! We would like for you to join this year’s Co-chairs Jason Glass and Brian Hughes, along with Honorary Chairs Elliot and Meg Nelson the evening of April 26 at the Cox Business Center. We are excited; together we can raise 2 million meals and celebrate the Food Bank’s 35th Anniversary of fighting hunger and feeding hope in eastern Oklahoma.

For more information or to sponsor, contact Heidi Ewing at 918-936-4544 or hewing@okfoodbank.org or visit our website at okfoodbank.org.
Thanks to incredible community support, the Food for Kids Backpack Program celebrated its tenth anniversary this fall. The program continues as a huge success, last year serving 9,900 children in 228 schools throughout 20 counties in our service area. In part, the success of the Backpack Program is due to an instinctive desire to help vulnerable children. Who can tolerate the thought of a hungry child?

For older students the question continues, does a better model exist for distributing food? What will help high-school students and their families make it through tough times? As professionals within the Feeding America Network weigh alternate models, the answer seems to reside in school-based food pantry programs for older students.

School food pantries have advantages that make them an attractive model. For one, they provide age-appropriate food choices. The snack-size, easy-open packaging that is necessary for younger students in the traditional Backpack Program, is not the best option for older kids. In the School Pantry Program, trained school professionals guide students in making healthy eating choices by utilizing the My Plate system, which graphically illustrates the five food groups required for a healthy diet. Students now involved in the process can choose the food they like based on availability, with the option to bring home needed food to their family. All in all, the school pantries offer a better delivery system for older students and their families and serves to build positive relationships between school and home.

In the Tulsa area, the School Pantry Program began last year at Memorial High School serving special needs and independent living students. Regenia Wilson a counselor, and Karen Martin, a veteran special education teacher began the prototype program. This year, they are transitioning to a new space and look forward to expanding the program.

At Memorial, student involvement is a strong goal. Wilson and Martin have formed a complimentary partnership that brings job and life skills training into the program. The special education students help stock and organize distributions at the pantry. Their teachers report the students have increased their confidence and gained a high level of personal investment in the program. Martin states, “Their experience working in our pantry is providing transferable skills for the job market.” In addition, since receiving benefits from the pantry, one student said, “My mom makes great spaghetti, and now we all get to sit down together.”

Currently, budding programs also exist at Booker T. Washington, East Central, Edison, McLain, Owasso, and Union. Most of the middle and high schools are making the transition from the Backpack Program to the School Pantries Program. This transition focuses on nutrition and the joys of eating for older students.

While the School Pantry Program is just getting started at Union High School, Cynthia Schaefer, who serves as the School Pantry Coordinator, already sees a difference. Last year, Union worked with the Backpack model. While most of the students in this year’s School Pantry Program are new, Schaefer reports she has heard from Donors likely may not realize how much they are helping. If they could only see the need of the students, and the work that is being done, they would know. A little goes such a long way for these students.”

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– Cynthia Schaefer

School Pantry Expansion

Studies from the American Academy of Pediatrics link food insecurity to deficits in learning, behavior and overall health in children of all ages.
former Backpack students that they appreciate being able to choose the foods they receive. With more choices available, Schaefer sees less waste, making the pantries efficient and cost effective for this age student. Feeding America suggests that school pantries offer students access at least once a month. As the schools in our service area get their pantries going, we find they recognize the importance of adaptability to the needs of students. For example, a frequent scenario is when Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits can’t stretch to the end of the month. Having food from the pantry available on campus for extenuating circumstances gives the students and their families added flexibility and support.

“My mom makes great spaghetti, and now we all get to sit down together.”
– Memorial High School Student

In addition, older students can, and often do, bring food home for their siblings. At one point, the Union pantry had a few packages of donated chocolate milk. Knowing his younger brother loved chocolate milk, one student was able to bring this treasure home, much to his brother’s delight.

When it comes to addressing the donors who make all of this possible, Schaefer states, “There isn’t enough thanks out there for the donors. “Donors likely may not realize how much they are helping. If they could only see the need of the students, and the work that is being done, they would know. A little goes such a long way for these students.”

Currently two-thirds of Tulsa Public High Schools have at least 95% of their students qualifying for free and reduced lunch benefits. The need at our schools is substantial. With your help, the Food Bank would like to expand this best-practice School Pantry Program to every high school in the area.

Before the establishment of the Backpack and School Pantry Programs at Union, many students would arrive to school hungry on Monday after a weekend deprived of adequate nutrition. That has changed, and Schaefer expressed the school’s gratitude for the Food Bank. Her determination, and that of other school professionals, can best be summed up by Schaefer, “We will make this a success, and it will grow.”

Thank you for your involvement and support. Working together you help us provide the resources each of these children need.

LOOKING AHEAD
One couple we recently met from a TPS school hopes a School Pantry Program will come to their children’s schools. Each works close to a minimum-wage job. They do receive SNAP, but often run short at month’s end. Ashley, the mother, said when they do need help they turn to family first. “Everyone in my family works, but sometimes at the end of the month, none of us have enough money left for food.” That is when she looks for help.

“What donors are doing is so kind, very helpful, much appreciated...basically they are saving lives.”
We are thankful for you, our volunteers!

At 92 years young, Jack Coursey holds the distinction as the Food Bank’s oldest active volunteer. Most every Thursday morning from 8:00 a.m. until noon, he serves as an Agency Shopper Aid, where you can find him working at the agency dock helping shoppers and staff members.

A born and bred Oklahoman and a graduate of Tulsa Central High School class of 1941, Jack quickly moved from the life of a high school teenager to that of a soldier flying in harm’s way. Jack served in World War II as an aerial gunner on the notoriously dangerous B-17 Flying Fortresses over North Africa, Italy and England from 1943-1945.

Now settled back into life in Tulsa, Jack enjoys sharing time with his six great-grandsons. Jack always says, “I’m just glad to be here and will be a part of the Food Bank as long as they let me.”

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY AVAILABLE AT THE FOOD BANK**

Are you interested in working in a professional kitchen? Cultivate your passion for food alongside the Food Bank’s own Executive Chef Jeff Marlow! Chef Jeff has many opportunities for kitchen volunteers. Visit tulsa-health.org/food-safety to get your free volunteer food handler’s permit online and join us in our culinary kitchen as we prepare meals for the hungry.

For more volunteer opportunities, contact Adam Baker at 918-936-4545 or abaker@okfoodbank.org.

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**Your Gifts Inspire Others.**

Aside from our work with 450 Partner Program across eastern Oklahoma, we also have several Food Bank programs which directly feed people in need. At a recent food distribution we met two separate families, who wish to remain anonymous, as both are recovering from incidents of domestic violence.

One person moved to Tulsa to start a new life. She was alone for the holidays, but was able to utilize some of the benefits she received from the Food Bank.

“I can use this and will be able to share with families who are hungry at my apartment. Thank you, I needed help. I like to help others, I like to pay back.”

Another family trying to make a fresh start has a grandmother providing childcare, a mother working, and a child going to school. Although they have the elements in place, they still struggle with putting enough food on the table towards the end of the month. Thanks to the assistance from a Food Bank Partner Program, this struggling family can make those ends meet.

So many issues play into the need for food assistance. Your help is critical. Once people are fed, they are able to better focus on other life challenges. Thank you for caring.

**Tax Advantage**

If you’d like to donate a portion of your state income tax return, be sure to fill out form 511-G (donations from a refund) and check the box marked “support of programs for regional food banks in Oklahoma.”
Together, we...

Thanks to your support, the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma is fighting hunger and feeding hope throughout our communities.

...Gathered for Giving Spirits

Thank you to all who joined us for a fantastic evening at Giving Spirits. There were bagpipes, cooking demonstrations, live music, great food, riveting seminars and a wide assortment of fine spirits provided by distillers from around the globe. Best of all were the many giving spirits who gathered to support the Food Bank.

Many thanks to Lorri and Pat Quinn, and Jean and Mike Quinn for their leadership and their stellar committee including: Megan and Don Zetik, 2014 Honorary Ambassadors, Rhonda Bailey, Marianne and Gary Benjamin, Elaine and Phillips Breckinridge, Rick Ewing, Cindy Henderson, Patsy and Tim Hepner, Paul James, Linda and Paul Johnson, John Kellerstrass, Elizabeth King, David Marshall and Ken Saveth.

... Ran to fight hunger

On Thanksgiving morning, more than 675 runners and walkers of all ages joined us at Guthrie Green for our 3rd Annual Turkey Day 5k. Families and friends gathered together to raise funds and awareness for the issue of hunger in our state. For too many neighbors, Thanksgiving is just another day to worry about how they’ll put food on the table.

Thank you for supporting our mission and helping to feed others this holiday season.

... Held successful food drives

The Food Bank relies heavily on support from organized food and fund drives. Thank you to all our recent drive donors especially: the 20 area schools who participated in the Erase Hunger Food Drive; to Channel 2/KJRH and Reasor’s who partnered in the 15th annual Food 2 Families Drive; and the City of Tulsa, the Tulsa Fire Department, the Tulsa Police Department and the Tulsa City-County Library System who all joined forces to host Stock the Station 2015.

You can help feed families by hosting a food and fund drive for the Food Bank. Contact Katie Lepine at klepine@okfoodbank.or or 918-936-4511 for more information.

Good Friends We’ve Had, Good Friends We’ve Lost

The Food Bank family recently lost two friends and loyal volunteers. Both are delightful examples of compassionate giving and humble service. Their impact was significant and we will miss them both.

**Don Broadland** was one of the Food Bank’s official Volunteer Leaders in our Product Recovery Center. Honored as “Volunteer of the Year” in 2008, Don was an extraordinary volunteer and a long-time donor to the Food Bank.

**Bernie Bartlett** volunteered at the Food Bank at least once a week, every week since 2008. Bernie volunteered with the Wednesday A.M. Whippersnappers group, one of our most notorious volunteer groups.

Advocacy in Action and You

Did you know that the recent Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) that was before Congress is a critical piece of legislation regarding school nutrition programs?

You can learn about issues like the CNR on our advocacy page at okfoodbank.org/waystohelp/advocacy. We also have information about tweeting your elected representatives. Members of Congress and their staff pay close attention to social media; let them know you care about hunger issues in your community. Finally, before leaving our site, sign up to receive the Oklahoma Food Banks Advocacy in Action Newsletter and stay in touch.
Faces around the Food Bank