

Second Harvest Food Bank of Lehigh Valley and Northeast Pennsylvania

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Stamp Out Hunger on May 12, 2012

Members of the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) will Stamp Out Hunger across America on May 12th by collecting non-perishable food donations from their regular postal routes and delivering them to local food banks for families in need.

This year will mark the 20th anniversary for the nation's largest single-day food drive with a 2011 collection of over 70 million pounds of food. Locally, Letter Carriers delivered more than 300,000 pounds of food to Second Harvest and our member agencies last year. Through the years, the Stamp Out Hunger food drive has resulted in over one million pounds of food for families in need in the six counties served by Second Harvest. These donations provide a critical boost for the Food Bank during the summer months, a time when supplies are low and school lunch programs are not available for area youth.

To participate in the food drive, leave your donation of non-perishable food items like pasta or canned soup, fruits, or vegetables next to your mailbox before the time of your regular delivery on May 12th.

Be sure to put everything in a sturdy bag that is clearly marked so your Letter Carrier knows to collect it. Donations should be in non-breakable containers such as boxes or cans – no glass please.

In the weeks before the food drive, you should receive a post card or a printed paper bag announcing your area's participation. If you're unsure whether or not your Letter Carrier is participating, you can always contact your local post office.

For more information about Stamp Out Hunger, visit www.helpstampouthunger.com or call Sharon Hall at Second Harvest, 610-434-0875. The Food Bank will also be welcoming volunteers to sort donations in the weeks after the food drive. For information about volunteering, contact Lindsay Deemer at 610-434-0875.



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2045 Harvest Way
Allentown, PA 18104-6793
SECOND HARVEST
Food Bank
of Lehigh Valley & Northeast Pennsylvania
A program of the
Community Action
Committee of the
Lehigh Valley

Food FOR Thought

Spring 2012

SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK OF LEHIGH VALLEY & NORTHEAST PENNSYLVANIA

Suppose They Gave a Revolution and Nobody Came

By Ann McManus

In the last issue of Food For Thought, we introduced Second Harvest Food Bank's Food Revolution, our effort to get more minimally processed foods onto the tables of low-income people.

The backbone of that program is a newly installed walk-in cooler that can hold up to 4,300 cubic feet of refrigerated product. Our walk-in freezer is designed to hold up to 7,200 cubic feet of frozen food. Together, they have a capacity of more than 250,000 pounds of perishable foods! On any given day, those two units may be filled to the ceiling with good, wholesome food. Recent products include varieties of cheese packed for families and for meal providers like our soup kitchens, yogurt, sour cream, cottage cheese, fresh and frozen vegetables, and different sorts of sausage and other meats. We've had a nice assortment of food to offer to our member agencies for distribution to those in need.

The biggest challenge we knew we would face when we started this project was in figuring out how to get the food to our member agencies and then into the hands of their recipients before it had time to spoil. These foods have a limited shelf-life, and our storing them until they are too old to consume does no one any favors, least of all our hungry neighbors.

And so we dreamed up Free Friday. For one hour in the afternoon of the first Friday of November last year, we invited our member agency network to send representatives to the Food Bank to select from our perishable bounty. Upon arrival, agencies were given a list of the fresh, frozen, and refrigerated products we had available. They could choose whatever they wanted from the list and take it with them back to their respective agencies. The product was not subject to the \$.16 per pound shared maintenance fee (hence, the "free" in Free Friday) and our only requirement was that they take everything they wanted with them that afternoon. The point of this distribution was to get the perishable product out of our warehouse and to our agencies before the weekend.

That first distribution, our agencies took more than 5,000 pounds of frozen vegetables as well as several cases of fresh leaf spinach and cauliflower. We distributed more than 7,900 pounds of food in just one hour! Needless to say, we have held Free Friday every Friday since that first distribution and it has become a weekly event our agencies look forward to.

Occasionally, our Free Friday offerings also include less healthy options such as the excess amounts of beverages and sweets we sometimes have on hand. Our hope is that by distributing these items through our member agencies at no cost, their recipients' limited household resources will then be available for purchasing healthier alternatives.

Since that first Free Friday, Second Harvest has distributed an average of 5,500 pounds of food every Friday. That's a whopping total of over 120,000 pounds as of this column, which is enough to provide more than 94,000 meals.

With your help, we will continue to provide healthy options to our members who in turn will make those options available to the people they serve.

Food Revolution Wish List

We are seeking in-kind donations to bolster our Fresh Food Initiative:

- If you are renovating your kitchen and replacing appliances, we can find a new home for your old refrigerator or freezer (upright or chest) as long as it is still in working condition. We will connect you with one of our member agencies in your area that is seeking appliances.
- Plant a row for the hungry! Add some extra plants to your backyard garden this summer and donate the excess edibles early in the week for distribution on Fridays.
- Glean with us. You can volunteer your time to our gleaning program collecting fresh farm produce for delivery to member agencies. Please note that this often does not involve actual field work!

For more information on any of these wish list items, please contact Second Harvest at 610-434-0875.



Every Friday, our warehouse staff line up some of the fresh, frozen, and refrigerated products we have available for Free Friday.



Member Agency representatives shop through the weekly Free Friday offerings like these cases of fresh carrots.



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Second Harvest Food Bank distributes food and grocery product to more than 66,000 people each month through a network of more than 200 member agencies in Carbon, Lehigh, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, and Wayne Counties. Agencies include emergency food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and child care and rehabilitation centers. Last year, Second Harvest distributed 5.7 million pounds of food through these agencies.

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The Second Harvest Food Bank of Lehigh Valley and Northeast PA is registered with the Bureau of Charitable Organizations through its parent organization the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley, Inc. A copy of the official registration and financial information can be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling, toll free, within PA, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement. This Program was financed in part by a grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Community and Economic Development.



Our First Cooking Matters™ Course is Complete!

Last summer, we introduced a new program called Cooking Matters that we were planning to implement at Second Harvest in partnership with Share our Strength. We are happy to report the program is in full swing and we even have our first class of Cooking Matters graduates!



Cooking Matters offers cooking-centered, interactive programming that teaches low-income people how to use the food commonly found in food pantries as well as low cost ingredients to make healthy meals. The program is designed to help families stretch their food dollar and become more self-sufficient by learning how to cook at home. As an added bonus, the meals encourage proper nutrition which leads to a number of health and social benefits.



The first Cooking Matters course was offered once a week for six weeks at the Boys and Girls Club of Bethlehem to kids under the age of twelve, with each class focusing on a different food type or meal. Each week, the kids watched a demonstration by our culinary instructor before taking to the kitchen to create the selected recipes which included healthy snacks, meals, and drinks. Some of their favorite dishes were “Cucumber Sammies,” “Fruit Smoothies,” and “Baked Flaked Chicken.”

Week two of the course focused on colorful fruits and vegetables, giving every participant the opportunity to taste, often for the first time ever, exotic produce and guess whether it was a fruit or vegetable. Ten year old Henry said “I liked the second class because it had a lot of fruit!”

Eight year old Aaliyah, on the other hand, preferred the class focusing on breakfast foods utilizing whole grains. She said, “I liked when we made French toast with chocolate strawberries on top.”



Cooking Matters Instructors showed participants how to prepare fun and healthy recipes at each weekly class.

For their graduation class at the end of March, the kids celebrated with a competitive game of Cooking Matters Trivia to test how much they’d learned from our nutrition instructor. They also made homemade mozzarella sticks and apple crisp from their Cooking Matters for Kids books. We hope all the Cooking Matters graduates continue to share their newly acquired nutrition knowledge and kitchen skills with their friends and families.



Congratulations to our first class of Cooking Matters for Kids graduates from the Boys and Girls Club of Bethlehem!

Volunteer View: Tom D.

In an average week, Second Harvest has more than 30 volunteers completing over 100 total hours of work. In addition to that, we have groups of 50 to 75 people that come on the first Tuesday and third Friday of the month to help pack boxes of food for seniors and bags for Backpack Buddies for area children. We rely on our volunteers and appreciate their generous gift of time.

Anyone who has been here for a pack event or stopped by the Food Bank to put in a few hours of community service has most likely met one of our most active volunteers, Tom D. Tom has been volunteering at Second Harvest since September 2009, and is a person who generally wants to feel that he is helping others in his community. Well trust us, he is doing just that. Tom has done everything at Second Harvest from distributing boxes of food to senior citizens to cleaning shelves in the warehouse and he is always willing to add more activities to his repertoire.

Tom is usually accompanied by Jeff W. an Employment Specialist with Community Services Group. Together, they pitch in and help out wherever they are needed. When asked why he likes coming to the Food Bank, Tom says he likes to work and to make even a small contribution to his community. And what does he like best about volunteering at the Food Bank? It’s getting to meet the other people that come out to volunteer.

“Jeff and Tom go above and beyond what it is to be a volunteer. They have helped Second Harvest in countless ways and countless hours. They inspire me and other volunteers to help fight hunger. Tom and Jeff are shining examples of kindness and dedication, and I truly appreciate them,” said Lindsay Deemer, Project Coordinator at Second Harvest.

In addition to his work at Second Harvest, Tom also volunteers for Artsquest (Musikfest, Christkindlmarkt), the Celtic Cultural Alliance (CelticFest), PA Adopt-A-Highway program, the Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community, the Cherryville Friendship Dance for the Disabled, and other smaller community events.

Thanks so much to Tom, Jeff, and all of our volunteers. We couldn’t do it without you!



Volunteer Tom D. is always ready to help in the warehouse, at our monthly pack events, or at food box distributions. Thanks Tom!!

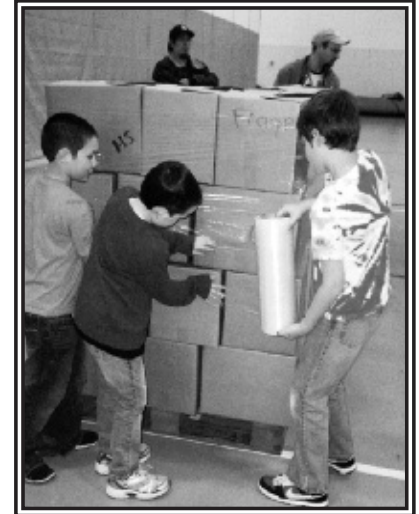
Parkland School District Collects 16,000 Pounds of Food for Second Harvest

For the past six years, students and staff at the Parkland School District take time every spring to collect food donations in their classes to be donated to Second Harvest. Students decorate boxes which are then placed in the elementary, middle, and high schools as well as the administrative building.

At the conclusion of the drive, all the donations are transported to the high school building where they are stacked on pallets and loaded on to the Second Harvest trucks. This year, students collected over 16,000 pounds of food – enough to fill two of our trucks!

For the food drive finale event, which took place on March 2nd this year, a few students from each grade are selected to go on a field trip to the high school to help stack the food on the pallets. Those students are then treated to a pizza party before following the Second Harvest trucks back to the Food Bank for a tour to see what happens next to their donations.

Check out some of the photos from this year's event!



The students who helped load the food follow our trucks to the Food Bank where they receive a tour from Second Harvest Director, Ann McManus, and they get to see what happens next to their donations.



Students and staff in the Parkland School District collected over 16,000 pounds of food this year at their annual district-wide food drive!

At the food drive finale event, selected Parkland students help stack all the donations on to pallets so they can be loaded on to the Second Harvest trucks and delivered to the Food Bank.

Second Harvest Member Agencies Come Together for Annual Cluster Meetings

Every Spring, we organize Cluster Meetings to give representatives from our member agencies a chance to come together to discuss current issues, best practices, and Food Bank updates. This March, Cluster Meetings took place at our warehouse in Allentown, as well as a number of other locations throughout our six-county service area. Representatives from more than 75 of our member agencies were in attendance.

A number of Second Harvest staff members presented to the agencies covering topics including Civil Rights, Food Safety, Advocacy Issues, and SNAP (Food Stamps) Outreach. Agency representatives also had the opportunity to interact with each other to discuss common concerns and to work out mutual solutions.

One of Second Harvest's member agencies, the Easton Salvation Army, was represented by Elizabeth Reyes, a Social Services Caseworker at the organization. She said, "the meeting was fun and it was informative. I especially liked meeting with the other agencies to share resources; I learned a lot. It's funny because I wasn't expecting a Cluster Meeting to be fun, but it was!" We hope all of our other agencies had as much fun and learned something too.



Agency Relations Coordinator, Dave Cool, speaks to Member Agency representatives at one of our recent Cluster Meetings.