

SPRING 2021

FEEDING HOPE NEWS



JaLisa receiving oranges at a drive-thru distribution

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Dear Friends,

Another Spring season is upon us, and it is hard to fathom that we have been operating in crisis mode for an entire year. Our nation, state, and community have been hit hard by the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It truly takes a village...

Over the past year, the Community Food Warehouse, food pantries and feeding programs endured a plethora of challenges to meet an almost immediate need for food assistance – a thirty percent increase.

The Community Food Warehouse ramped up efforts and held public distributions twice a month and offered direct services for those who found themselves in dire need.

Member agencies' choice food pantries morphed into contact-less drive through distributions and feeding programs transformed their dining halls into assembly lines and offered meals to go.

Able bodied Mercer County residents stepped up to give their time when many volunteers had to shelter in place because they were considered high risk.

Together, as a community, we were able to meet this incredible need and will continue to do so as we progress through 2021.

Last year, the CFWMC distributed over 1.7 million pounds of food through a network of 30 dedicated and hardworking food pantries and feeding sites.

Simply put, we could not do what we do without your support.

Many of our friends and neighbors will be recovering from the implications of the pandemic into the foreseeable future and will be relying on the charitable food network to make ends meet.

As we prepare to launch our Spring campaign, we ask that you join us by donating funds, food or time to help us Starve Hunger ~ Feed Hope here in Mercer County.

The staff and board of directors of the Community Food Warehouse would like to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who offered their help during these uncertain times. Every act of kindness – every can of food, dollar, hour of time, note of encouragement and phone call was, and still is, greatly appreciated.

With gratitude,

REBECCA PAGE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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Agency Spotlight

St. Joseph's Church, Sharon

Which services do you currently provide to your clients?

We distribute 2 bags of groceries twice a month and an additional bag with families of 3 or more children.

How many families do you serve a month, on average? Have you experienced an increase in the number you serve since the pandemic?

We serve 45 to 50 clients per distribution. We have had 4 COVID clients sign up but only 2 have returned. We're seeing a decrease among our senior clients. We are assuming this is because of the pandemic and not due to our new procedures.

What is your paid staff/volunteers ratio? How many volunteers does it take to run your pantry?

We have no paid staff--all are volunteers. We have approximately 26 volunteers but several haven't been coming due to the pandemic or other issues. We need about 12-15 volunteers to really work smoothly.

Have you had a particularly profound or uplifting moment with a client or volunteer you would like to share?

No one moment comes to mind but every distribution when you receive all the thank you's from our clients is really humbling.

How have you changed your distribution model due to COVID-19?

We have moved our distribution from the basement of the church to outside. Clients drive to the side of the church and we place the groceries inside their cars. This works really well and we will continue with this procedure.

How has being a member agency of Community Food Warehouse helped you to provide better service to your clients?

To be able to purchase food from the warehouse gives us a better assortment of food for our clients. It has also been very helpful to the people running the pantry to have their questions answered.

Is there anything you would like to share about your agency that people may not know?

At Christmas time we make a list of all our children ages 12 and below and hand out lists to our parishioners to purchase gifts for these children. This has been a very successful project due to our generous parishioners.



SAVE THE DATE!



12th Annual Race to End Hunger

SATURDAY,
SEPTEMBER 18, 2021
BC3 AT LINDENPOINTE

Visit <https://www.facebook.com/events/2811013832505216> for details



EMPTY BOWLS

Thursday, October 21, 2021

12:00-7:00 pm

*Hope Center for Arts and
Technology*

Visit

[https://www.facebook.com/
events/845264369157255](https://www.facebook.com/events/845264369157255)

for details.

MEET TOM DOYLE



Tom began work as the new Operations Manager of the Community Food Warehouse on February 1st. We're happy to have him aboard!

Tell us about your background.

I started in the restaurant business at 15. I attended the University of Akron for Culinary Arts and Business Management. When I was 25 I earned my CEC (Certified Executive Chef Certificate). I worked as Executive Chef at Pepper's Gourmet Foods and Catering in Youngstown then at West Point Market in Fairlawn, Ohio. I owned and operated my own restaurant for 9 years before selling and transitioning into food banking at Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley in 2012.

What attracted you to the CFWMC?

I've had contact with the Community Food Warehouse over the years while working as Operations Manager at Second Harvest Food Bank in Youngstown, Ohio. I was always impressed by the professionalism of the people that I dealt with. It has always been obvious that there is a strong sense of community, high values and a great feeling of team spirit at CFW. When I heard that the food bank was looking for an Operations Manager it felt like something I should pursue. I think this is a great opportunity for me to get to work with a great team of people while serving a great community.

What are you most looking forward to now that you've joined the CFWMC team?

I'm mostly looking forward to becoming an active part of the Mercer County community. In my short time here I have already seen so many exciting opportunities and ideas for the future. I was fortunate to come in right before the kick off of the meal bus and summer feeding as well as other exciting programs using local growers and other area businesses. I look forward to receiving a great education from my team members as well as CFW agencies and partners. Everyone has given me a great welcome!

What do you have to bring to the table as an Operations Manager?

I have 8 years of experience in food banking. I had the opportunity as I came in to work to learn a variety of positions, from order pulling and driving to inventory control, logistics and purchasing. I think I bring with me a positive outlook on what we do and a great respect for the mission of the food bank. My food service experience over the years is also a valuable tool as we work to serve the people of the community safe, nutritious food.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

In my spare time I still very much enjoy cooking. I love the creativity. It's also a great way to spend time with the family. I enjoy pretty much anything outside. A good weekend for me is working around the yard through the day then grilling and a bonfire in the evening.



Community Collaborations

Extra Helpings with

The Corinthian Banquet Hall and Event Center



By Mimi Prada, Agency / PR Manager/ Grant Writer

In the critical summer months of the pandemic, the Community Food Warehouse was awarded a substantial grant by Feeding America through its COVID-19 Response Fund. Thanks to generous donors, an unprecedented amount of grant funding over the past year has been deployed to food banks in the network across the nation to meet the wide and varied needs of communities both small and large. As philanthropic contributions from corporations, individuals and foundations began flooding into Feeding America early in the pandemic, it was necessary to pool these funds into a COVID -19 Response fund to re-grant them to member food banks to react to and sustain hunger relief efforts.

This particular grant awarded to the CFWMC, per donor intent, has as one of its goals, the increase of the level of service to individuals most disproportionately affected by the pandemic; those that had heightened barriers and challenges to food access and to target this demographic utilizing these grant funds. Many of these folks are homebound individuals, seniors and individuals who are consumers of mental health services throughout the county. In efforts to meet the goals of this grant opportunity, the CFWMC had to prepare to be more resilient and provide services differently than in the past and to formulate a plan to meet this crisis. The plan was required to be fully implemented in a 9-month period from August 2020 through April 2021.

Our plan, unlike anything we had done before, was to form Extra Helpings, a fresh/frozen home meal delivery program. The task was daunting. We reached out to our senior centers and a mental health service provider in the county and worked together on lists of the most vulnerable individuals in need of food assistance that would benefit the most from a home meal delivery program. The budget afforded us the opportunity to serve 500 meals per week for the 9-month grant period. Five specific routes were formed throughout the county reaching out into the rural areas as well as to seniors living more local to the food bank. Areas were chosen as to the greatest number of residents in need of the meals. Every person was called and had the program explained to them and were given their delivery dates and approximate times for each month. Each route then needed delivery drivers/volunteers.



Employees Carrie Litter and Kara Hughes finish prepping



Extra Helpings of mixed veggies and mac 'n cheese

Community Collaborations

Continued



Owner, John Bianco

We have been overwhelmed by the volunteers who committed their time each month for 9 months to delivering these meals to our residents in most need...through sunshine, rain, sleet, and snow! The program could never be done without them! We are beyond grateful.

Prior to the delivery plan, was the immediate need to find someone who could fill the need of 500 meals per week for 9 months. A long-time supporter of the food bank, John Bianco, owner of The Corinthian Banquet Hall & Event Center in Sharon, became our partner in this venture. The partnership was perfect. As a caterer of large events, John's business came to a screeching halt and his staff was faced with no work in what would normally be the busiest time of the year, with weddings and other large gatherings as their typical business. The funds from this grant could be used to hire the Corinthian to source and prepare fresh home cooked 2-meal units that are frozen and delivered to the food bank for distribution each week. The meals vary each week from different protein sources, vegetables, and starches...homemade fresh and cooked with LOVE! John and his staff make every meal with the same care and quality as they would for a wedding. And did I say that the recipients of those meals are happy? We get calls every week saying thank you for the meals and that they are so enjoyed! Hear what one dear 98-year-old lady has to say:

"Thank you so much for thinking of me. I live alone; I don't get out much, and sometimes I just don't feel like cooking. I will just eat a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. It is so nice and comforting to be able to heat up this meal, and oh my, it's a lot of food....and so delicious! God bless you all!"



Kara Hughes dishing out the mac 'n cheese

It is our hope that Extra Helpings has been a help in this great time of need to the people it serves. And to be able to partner with a local business and lend a hand to help John and his staff at the Corinthian have work to return to, means the world to us. They have worked diligently to make this program a success. Thank you, John, and staff. This is community at its best. And we are so grateful for the generous donors to Feeding America that make it possible for funds to funnel down to our food bank in Mercer County, that helped make this happen.

How You Can Help

SPRING CAMPAIGN

April 1 - May 31, 2021

The Community Food Warehouse experienced a 30% increase among those seeking food assistance in 2020. Your financial contribution will allow us to continue to meet the needs of our food insecure neighbors here in Mercer County.

[Visit foodwarehouse.org for details.](http://foodwarehouse.org)



MilitaryShare is coming to Greenville!

TUESDAY, APRIL 13TH

Open to Veterans and Active
Duty Service Members in need
of food assistance.

Call Sarah at 724-981-0353 ext. 106
to register today!

