Muncie’s Poorest Children and Families Grateful for Summer School Pantry

Tears spill down Deb Huston’s face when she talks about students visiting her school’s food pantry distributions.

Deb is a special education aide and pantry coordinator at Muncie’s Southside Middle School. Thanks to generous donors supporting Second Harvest Food Bank, the school opened a school food pantry in early 2016 to serve its neediest families.

“When I see a student who walks or rides their bike or takes a bus here by themselves to take food back for their families, you know they’ve been hungry. You know that family is struggling.”

Southside is able to assist even during the summer. “We started with four students and now we’re serving 160 students each week during the school year. This July, I expect we’ll serve around 200 families at the monthly food distribution during school registration week.”

Still, without the benefit of school lunches, Deb knows the summer months can be the hardest for parents to bridge the hunger gap. Muncie’s economic struggles continue; its per-capita income is about $17,000, compared with the U.S. average of just under $30,000.

Since the start of the School Pantry Program, Deb says that teachers have noticed a difference in the classroom. “They’ve talked about kids whose behavior is improved and grades have gone up. I think they’re less distracted by hunger, so they can concentrate better.”

This summer, Second Harvest’s participating schools will receive a total of nearly 37 tons of food to provide hundreds of families the equivalent of over 61,000 meals. Your gift of $24 covers a family’s food gap for one month.

Thank you for your continuing generosity as we work to expand our School Pantry Program to reach even more children and parents across all eight counties we serve!

FACT: According to City-Data.com, about one in five Muncie residents is living in “deep poverty” (income is below 50% of the poverty level)—about triple the percent of Indiana as a whole.

“When I see the kids...how their eyes light up because they left their house where there was no food, and they show up here and see all these tables filled...they know they’ll have enough to eat for a while...that’s why we’re here.”

— Deb Huston
Preventing the “Silver Tsunami”

Feeding America says that senior citizens are the fastest growing group of food-insecure people. By 2028, their hunger rate is projected to double—to about one in six. This wave of aging Americans (which many call the “silver tsunami”) is already affecting Feeding America’s network of 200 food banks and 60,000 partner food pantries and meal programs.

“Senior hunger is not an issue our country can ignore,” said Diana Aviv, CEO of Feeding America. “The costs of rent, groceries and medical care have forced millions of older adults to make impossible choices. …This reality will only get worse if we don’t step in with significant support.”

About 6 in 10 older adult households served by food banks say they must choose whether to buy food or pay for other necessities like medical care/prescriptions, utilities, or transportation.

This past year, Second Harvest Food Bank established a Senior Safety Net. Currently running at three senior housing sites in Madison and Delaware counties and one “Senior Café” in Daleville, the program is providing elderly neighbors in need with about 30 pounds of nutritious food monthly to relieve some of their financial burden. The sites are sponsored by both the Glick Fund and LifeStream Services.

With your generous help, I know we can expand Second Harvest’s crucial Senior Safety Net program to the remaining six in our eight-county service area. Because of you, we’ll be ready for the “silver tsunami” as we make a huge difference every month for more seniors who are making too many desperate choices in order to have enough to eat.

Have a great summer,

Tim Kean
President & CEO
Your Generosity: Help for Today, Hope for Tomorrow

On April 20, eight people graduated from Circle Leader Training, the first step in Second Harvest Food Bank’s Circles program. Circles helps individuals and families address circumstances that placed them, or are keeping them, in poverty, while equipping them with tools to move toward self-sufficiency.

“We want to support families to go beyond surviving and move toward thriving,” says Circles program director Dorica Watson. “Donor gifts support our ability to help families access what they need to move forward.”

During the 16- to 20-week training, individuals identify areas for personal growth and improvement. Their path toward self-sufficiency is unique. Some might focus on education. Others, work skills. Others, financial literacy, or even relationship or leadership skills. After graduation, participants continue working on their goals, with Second Harvest Circles staff and volunteers becoming friends and accountability partners.

“Circles matches last 18 months or more because positive, supportive relationships set people up for success, and building those takes time and commitment. Participants check in on a monthly basis with their special ‘volunteer allies’ who continue to support them in reaching their goals,” Watson explains.

Weekly, graduates can also return with their families for a shared dinner and special Circles program that focuses on building and sustaining resources. Families take turns helping to prepare, serve, and clean up after the meal.

Circles works to break the cycle of generational poverty. “We want to prevent what we can predict — to make sure that our participants’ kids are accessing similar education and support from very early on.” A special youth curriculum offers leadership training that helps kids form a personal belief system, affirming strong values and positive empowerment.

“I have been blown away by the changes that have happened for some of the kids going through this program. We had one student go from getting straight F’s to not a single F on the most recent grade report.”
— Dorica Watson

We want to support families to go beyond surviving and move toward thriving. Donor gifts support our ability to help families access what they need to move forward.
— Dorica Watson
Here’s my gift to help hungry neighbors this summer!

☐ $35  ☐ $50  ☐ $100  ☐ $250  ☐ $500  ☐ $__________

Enclosed is my check made payable to Second Harvest Food Bank of East Central Indiana.

☐ Please charge my ☐ monthly ☐ one-time gift of $______________ to my ☐ Visa  ☐ MC  ☐ Discover  ☐ AMEX

Card No. ____________________________

Exp. Date ___________ Sec. Code __________

Signature ____________________________________________

☐ I have included Second Harvest Food Bank in my will or estate plan.

☐ I would like more information about including Second Harvest Food Bank in my will or estate plan.

Call (765) 287–8698 to charge your gift by phone. Visit curehunger.org to give online.

Visit curehunger.org for more news and stories about how you are providing help for today and hope for tomorrow for more hungry Hoosiers!

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Second Harvest Food Bank of East Central Indiana  
6621 N. Old SR 3  Muncie, IN 47303  (765) 287–8698

Food Insecurity Persists in East Central Indiana

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<th>COUNTY</th>
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Total Food Insecure Individuals 70,150