



OFF THE SHELF

FALL 2017 NEWSLETTER

Mixing It Up

Fresh produce is a necessity at the Foodbank and has been for several years. With over 71% of people that access food pantries having health ailments, such as diabetes, hypertension, or heart disease, fresh produce becomes more than food, it becomes medicine. So with the demand for fresh produce becoming greater, the Foodbank has turned to a new way of getting the products that so many people need.

Five regional mixing centers have been established by Feeding America throughout the United States to help food banks share produce loads and acquire more varieties of produce. Before using the mixing center, Central Illinois Foodbank would have had to place an order for a whole truck load of one kind of produce product and would have had just four types of fresh produce to choose from on a regular basis: apples, potatoes, onions and cabbage. Now, thanks to the Foodbank's mixing center, based at Gleaners Food Bank of Indiana, eleven different types of fresh produce are available, including sweet peppers, cantaloupe, squash, carrots, and honey dew melons, just to name a few.

"Due to the cost of shipping, ordering just a few pallets of a product wasn't financially possible," said Kristy Gilmore, Central Illinois Foodbank food and agency resources director. "Now we can put in

an order for a pallet of sweet potatoes, a pallet of cantaloupe, and a pallet of watermelons, and have more for our agencies to choose from."

On top of the variety and the amount the Foodbank is able to distribute, using the mixing center helps to get the produce out of the door quicker once it arrives at the Foodbank. "The biggest difference I've seen is in our ability to pre-plan what produce we are going to have on hand for our agencies," said Gilmore. "Since they know a week or two ahead of time, they can order it before it even arrives, and then it goes straight out and doesn't sit in our coolers long at all. This process is also cutting back on our waste."

Since the Foodbank began working with the mixing center in May, nearly 250,000 pounds of fresh produce have been distributed to our over 150 pantries. That equates to 18,000 pounds of fresh produce the Foodbank is receiving each week. Cut that down to the bottom line and that's 23 cents a pound to bring fresh produce to the tables of those who wouldn't be able to afford it otherwise.

While using the mixing center is a more cost effective way to obtain more variety, the Foodbank still needs to raise \$3,000 a month to keep the current amount of fresh produce on the tables of those who are hungry.



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DIRECTOR'S DISH

by Pam Molitoris
Executive Director



The phrase “adapt or die” has been one that has been uttered many times over the last decade, especially as technology has advanced and the world is in a constant state of change. While the die part of that statement is a little dramatic, the Foodbank has had to adapt to the food banking world that is changing on a consistent basis. Over the past few years, we have really been making a push to introduce new programs, especially ones that include fresh produce. Now, we are trying out a new way of receiving that produce.

The fact is how you and I, as consumers, get food into our own homes is changing. At a recent Feeding America conference I attended, one of the speakers threw out the number, 70% of all food that is in households will come from Amazon in 2025. I know I personally have my groceries delivered, not by Amazon, but by a local grocery store. It's convenient and it's cost-effective; they deliver for free.

As this model of home grocery deliveries expands, stores will start to see a shift. Supply will change, which means we will have to change with it. With fewer people using the grocery store in a traditional sense, some of the ways we get food, such as our food recovery program, could see a significant dip in the future.

We also know that as the industry improves their efficiencies in production and distribution, we will see declines in the availability of product. This creates an urgency to look at our own efficiencies and partners in feeding those who are hungry.

While, using a mixing center isn't necessarily having Amazon deliver a pallet of oranges to the Foodbank, it is the type of forward thinking we are going to need to feed our neighbors. Out of the box thinking, adapting to change, and developing partnerships that result in greater efficiencies, are key to helping alleviate hunger in our communities.

Foodbank Earns 8th Consecutive 4-Star Rating

Central Illinois Foodbank has been awarded a 4-star rating for demonstrating strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency from Charity Navigator. The 4-star rating is the highest possible rating given by Charity Navigator, America's largest independent charity evaluator.

Central Illinois Foodbank is no stranger to the 4-star rating; 2017 marks the eighth consecutive year that the Foodbank has received the honor. Only 2% of the charities that Charity Navigator evaluates have received at least eight consecutive 4-star evaluations, indicating that Central Illinois Foodbank outperforms most other charities in America. This exceptional designation from Charity Navigator sets Central Illinois Foodbank apart from its peers and demonstrates to the public its trustworthiness.

"Receiving our eighth consecutive 4-star rating from Charity Navigator is a true honor. This solidifies our honesty and openness to our donors, ensuring them that their money is being used to help alleviate hunger in our communities," said Central Illinois Foodbank executive director, Pam Molitoris.

Aside from earning another 4-star rating, Central Illinois Foodbank was awarded a "Perfect 100" score for the second year in a row. The Foodbank is one of only 59 not-for-profits, out of the over 8,000 rated by Charity Navigator, to achieve a perfect score.



Walt Disney Company Helps Distribute Fresh Produce

Thanks to The Walt Disney Company, the Foodbank, along with partners SIU Center for Family Medicine and Central Counties Health Centers, will distribute more fresh produce to those who need it most. Central Illinois Foodbank was awarded a \$15,000 grant from Disney to supply two large coolers and fresh produce to each of the health center sites. Often, when individuals seek medical care, physicians recommend more fruits and vegetables. However, for low-income individuals who visit these facilities, access to fresh fruits and vegetables can be a challenge due to the higher cost of purchasing fresh produce, and limited hours of operation of local pantries, especially for working families. With the addition of these coolers that were provided by Disney, the Foodbank hopes to distribute 1,000 pounds of fresh produce, per week, per site from the health centers sites.





Spotlight on Hunger

Michael and Melissa Pickett were having to make tough choices back in 2011. Melissa was in school full-time and between the two of them they were working three jobs, but were still struggling to pay the rent, pay utilities, and pay for food.

"We tried to resist it as much as we could. We didn't want to pursue food stamps, but after a while we looked into the option of going onto the SNAP program," said Michael. "I remember the day we got approved for them actually," said Melissa. "We were waiting to hear back from them and going over our electric bill and we said ok how long do we have before our electric will get turned off and how much food do we have. Just then they called and told us we had been approved for emergency benefits. It was such a sense of relief."

The couple received \$200 a month for the both of them to purchase groceries, and while they were stretched thin with that amount, Melissa's life experiences held her back from the couple visiting pantries.

"I had gone to pantries as a teenager when I still lived with my mother, and I had to go by myself because my mother worked full-time," said Melissa. "I think for me it was the stigma, because I remember those experiences. I felt like we didn't really need it, I felt undeserving." "I think when I look back on it we probably did need to go to a pantry," Michael added.

The Pickett's were only on SNAP benefits for 11 months and now are back on their feet with Michael serving as the morning radio show host at WTIM in Taylorville and Melissa as a counselor.

While their time on SNAP benefits did not last long, making tough choices between food and other necessities is something Melissa has been faced with much of her life. She has now broken the cycle of poverty, and wants people to know one thing about children growing up in poverty. "They are not less capable, they are not less intelligent or hardworking.



Michael and Melissa Pickett were SNAP recipients for 11 months.

A lot of times it's just opportunity and I was fortunate that I was presented with opportunity to put myself through school and a partner who supported me. Money is the only difference when it comes to kids who need food."