As we approach month 6 of COVID19 Pandemic, I am proud to say that the Northeast Iowa Food Bank has risen to the occasion to provide food to so many. We have done that in many ways - all stemming from partnerships created over the years, and in recent months. These partnerships enabled the Northeast Iowa Food Bank to provide more food to northeast Iowa than ever before and meals to people in need than any other food bank in Iowa. (Feeding America FY 20 MPIN report)

In 2017, the Food Bank put together their strategic plan to Close the Meal Gap in northeast Iowa by 2025. The Meal Gap at the time was 8.4 million meals. The Pandemic has shown us that number is projected to be nearly 9 million meals. Even after providing more meals to people than ever before, the Meal Gap still lingers in the shadows.

In my last article, I spoke about the community partnerships and volunteerism and how they helped us get food out to the community. Here, I want to focus on food partnerships and how we access product to ensure we can serve northeast Iowa.

Traditionally, our food came from manufacturers and large commercial vendors. Over the years, we have significantly increased the amount of perishable foods we receive through our vendors. One thing we know for sure is that food donations continue to be ever-changing and the development of more partnerships is crucial to ensuring that we have access to the food we need in order to serve the community. Our partnerships span national, regional and local sources.

Within our 16 counties, partnerships mean picking up product at grocery stores and distribution centers, convenience stores, accessing government resources, connecting member agencies with retailers, and developing new resources. Our partnership with Feeding America have brought us donations from national manufacturers like Tyson, ConAgra and other food banks in the Feeding America network.

In addition, we were able to access additional food resources for Commodity foods because of the Families First Act and the Cares Act. This will help us ensure we have a steady stream of product for our member agencies and programs for those we serve. We are also fortunate to receive product through the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program. (Continue Reading)
Through the pandemic we have developed new partnerships with State Government and many of our farmers. This includes pork, beef, turkey, egg, cereal and pasta producers. Working with the Governor's office, we have and will continue to access product that we don't often see in our inventory, and if we do, it is often the first to be distributed. We are grateful to all of those who stepped up to make this happen.

If we don't have food, we can't Close the Meal Gap. When one source is no longer available, we have to find others. Feeding America, the State of Iowa, the Federal Government and all of our local partners have stepped up to help us provide food at a time when it is needed most. If there is an opportunity, the Food Bank goes after it all to ensure people in northeast Iowa have access to the food.

Thanks to the community that supports us to ensure this food is available. All so we can put the smiles on the faces of many.

On behalf of those we serve, thank you.

Barb Prather, Executive Director
Northeast Iowa Food Bank

Make A Donation
Remember, every $1 you give can help us provide up to 4 meals. As the country awaits a second round of stimulus money, consider how you might use that to better the lives of those impacted by the recent public health and environmental crises that northeast Iowans have experienced.

We Need Volunteers
We understand that everyone volunteers for different reasons. That's why our volunteer opportunities are individually designed to meet your needs. Because we believe that when you are at your best, so are we. Join other awesome people like you who contributed more than 35,000 hours last year, helping serve over 7 million meals to those in need!

Our Team
Barb Prather, Executive Director
Alisha Rulapaugh, Director Engagement
Michelle Sullivan, Director of Impact
Shannon Bass, Partner Capacity Manager
Shelly Bellendier, Culinary Programs Coordinator
Dan Bohnker, Group Volunteer Coordinator
Jeff Bowman, Driver/Warehouse Coordinator
Maddie Christensen, Individual Volunteer Coordinator
Lauren Clapp, Pantry Services Coordinator
Jeff Eastman, Warehouse Worker
Debra Eckermain, Inventory Specialist
Susan Enriksen, Community Outreach Manager
Jim Flood, Warehouse Foreman
Caleb Gipple, Americorps VISTA
Brent Grooms, Warehouse Worker
Tia Gutierrez, Partner Capacity Coordinator
Nikki Hahn, Culinary Programs Manager
Austin Hamlett, Receiving Coordinator
Cassidy Hanson, AmeriCorp VISTA
Bryan Helleson, Marketing Manager
Melissa Hickok, Financial Controller
Tate Hoepner, Warehouse Custodian
Rebecca Huber, Food Sourcing Manager
Rhonda McBride, Service Insights Manager
Emily McVicker, AmeriCorp VISTA
Elizabeth Mehl, Americorps VISTA
Andrew Mohr, Warehouse Worker
Tyler Montgomery, Product Sort & Repack Coordinator
Tammy Morrison, Admin Assistant
Kelsey Mumm, Partner Capacity Coordinator
Christina Paw Say, Americorps VISTA
Caren Rhoads, Janitor
Melody Rosche, AmeriCorp VISTA
Tom Roschen, Fleet Coordinator/Driver
AJ Royer, Human Resources Manager
Levi Slight, Retail Store Donation Coordinator
Lisa Spitler, Food Assistance/SNAP Outreach Coordinator
Doug Stufflebeam, Warehouse/Driver
Tom Swalin, Operations Manager
Mara Warnke, Pantry Service Manager
Leo White, Food Room Coordinator
Freddie Williams, Receiving Coordinator

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northeastiowafoodbank.org
The State of Hunger
A COVID-19 Update

There is a crisis coming unlike anything since the Great Depression.

43,000 people didn’t have enough to eat before this crisis hit.
Rising unemployment and poverty rates will cause this figure to increase.

By the end of 2020, 1 in 7 of our neighbors will face hunger.
In 2019, it was 1 in 9.

That’s over 52,000 northeast Iowans who will now struggle with hunger.
That’s an additional 9,300 people, including 5,380 more children.

Looking ahead, we expect a 21% increase in demand.
To meet this need, we will need to provide 1.5 million more meals.

But this won’t stop us. We are here for the long haul.

Moving Forward
KEEPING MOMENTUM

We know COVID-19 will have lasting impacts on our community. With elevated unemployment and poverty rates, we predict a surge in need that will last years.

We don’t want to just endure this crisis—we want to come out stronger and in a better position to serve our community.

Will you help us make that happen?
Despite an unprecedented increase in demand during our 4th quarter, we were able to finish the year off with an equally unprecedented distribution. You might ask, “Well, how do you do that?” To answer that, we must go deeper. We’ve broken down the top 5 questions that we get asked, to help you see a clearer picture of how we’re able to do what we do.

Q: How does my donation get used?

We want you to know how far we try to stretch your dollar when you invest in us. That’s why when we tell people that $0.97 of every dollar they give goes directly to feeding people, and only $.03 goes to fundraising, management and general expenses, they can’t believe it! But it’s true!

Q: Where does all the food go?

We operate 8 different programs that serve diverse groups of people all over urban and rural northeast Iowa. That means that the ways in which we feed these people must also be diversified.
Q: What kind of foods do you serve?

Healthy Food Continues To Win

The last two years were the first in 37 years of operation that a majority of our distribution mix was produce and perishable foods. We are heavily focusing on implementing healthy foods into the diets and lives of all of our northeast Iowa clients.

Q: Where do you get funding?

Balanced Funding Streams

Our commitment to financial sustainability relies on multiple funding streams to ensure we can keep feeding hungry northeast Iowans.

Q: Where does the food come from?

Generosity, Support, and Strategy

Food donations are a very important piece of our food aggregation strategy, but we cannot rely on them alone. This is why we encourage people to donate money in lieu of food if they can, because every dollar donated can help provide up to 4 meals. You won’t find that kind of deal in the grocery store.
“There’s no worse feeling in this world other than to wonder, ‘Am I going to be able to provide shelter, food, and our basic needs?’ It’s not about the school or the money that comes in or comes out. It’s no longer about that. It’s about survival.”

Imagine not knowing where your next meal is going to come from. To this Cedar Valley Food Pantry client and her disabled son, this was a reality.

Katelyn and her son made the trek from California to Iowa. Born premature, the little boy had a long list of medical issues, having five surgeries before he even turned two, and Katelyn being on her own wanted to have the support of her family who resided in Iowa. With over a decade of experience in corporate restructuring, financial management, and small business, Katelyn was ready to settle down in Iowa and find a job that would provide for her and her son.

But it wasn’t that easy. Katelyn quickly found that she would need more than a high-school degree to find a good job here, so she decided to go back to school. Katelyn spent her days taking care of her son and her nights attending classes. She got involved in the community, and worked toward attaining three bachelor’s degrees. Refreshed and ready, she was excited to step out and look for some full-time employment.

“But again, it wasn’t that easy. Katelyn found it difficult to separate herself from the other candidates. She was still actively involved with many non-profits in the area, but still couldn’t seem to find a career that fit her and her son’s lifestyle with him in the emergency room every other week. Looking for a way to stand out in the crowd in a job that suited her way of life, Katelyn decided to further her education even more.

“I went for my MBA, thinking, ‘This is really going to be it. This is going to make me the candidate to hire.’ And while I was doing my first master’s degree, I got more involved with community work, more involved with nonprofits. I started seeing different needs. My purpose in life was to help others,” said Katelyn.

Her purpose was also helping her son, as she drove him back and forth to Iowa City, constantly taking him to physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and many other appointments. But things took a turn. After a brain hemorrhage, he became extremely ill and was walking the line between life and death.

“He had been on life support. They told me to pull the plug because he had a brain hemorrhage. The quality of life would be diminished, and it was very serious,” Katelyn said.

Focusing more on how they could overcome this rather than on just the doctor’s scientific percentages, she decided not to pull the plug. During the pursuit of not one, but two master’s degrees, AEA267 reached out and said she could work part-time and have her son right next door in their facility. She was grateful as she continued on with her two masters, excited to qualify herself as a good candidate for a job where she could help others while being able to care for her son.

But with three bachelor’s degrees and two master’s degrees, Katelyn found herself now overqualified for a lot of positions and assistance. Her and her son were struggling.

“I can sacrifice as a parent, but it was hard to see my child sacrifice and not have food.”
“I can sacrifice as a parent, but it was hard to see my child sacrifice and not have food. I mean, we had food, but how long can you make pancakes for? That was our reality at the time. I made him pancakes for seven days in a row, because I didn’t have any money left,” Katelyn said.

But then she changed her mindset about getting help with food. She decided to come check out the Cedar Valley Food Pantry at the Northeast Iowa Food Bank.

“I went and was like, ‘Wow!’ My idea of what a food bank would offer was different than what it was. And it wasn’t shameful. It was like shopping. It allowed you to keep your dignity. And it really was there for someone who needed it. I could do so much, and I just felt so relieved. And then I made real meals. Like real meals! Healthy meals… the stuff that we would eat if I had money. I was just so shocked… You know, I never needed a lot in life. But I never thought that I would walk in and feel like I hit the lottery and I had food.”

Her son felt the same way:

“Even though I didn’t talk about it with him, he knew what was going on. And to see the stress off of him… he was just so happy. We could have family meals again. I mean it was just so simple… just to be able to have that quality time with him again and just to say, ‘Okay, we’re going to have food. We don’t have to eat pancakes.’”

The two of them were so thankful for the wonderful food they received and were shocked at the quality and quantity of it all.

“I had a perception that it was going to be low quality. I really think that everyone else needs to understand that this is like grocery shopping at your regular store. It’s high quality. It’s diverse. There is a variety of stuff for everyone. There are also basic things like rice and lentils and beans. Basic stuff that will provide more meals, but also the recipes that go with it. It is complete quality meals that you can put together. The Food Bank is quality food from people who really care and are not just giving you scraps and whatever’s left. They’re really trying to give you good, quality food and nourishment for you and your family with no questions asked.”

With more food on the table and a job lined up for spring, things started falling into place, and Katelyn felt hopeful.

“I thought, ‘Okay, we’re finally going to get out of this. Then the pandemic hit, and that significantly changed everyone’s world. We’re still just doing it a day at a time. We’re choosing to look at this as a positive thing. We were quarantined before when he caught a contagious illness, so we’ve done the whole school thing before. We rock homeschool,” Katelyn said.

Choosing to see the positives in each day is exactly what Katelyn does and what she hopes her son will do too. They cling on to all the things they have to be grateful for and thank the Food Bank for putting food on their table.

“We wouldn’t be eating if it wasn’t for the Food Bank. We wouldn’t be eating at least a week and a half out of the month if it wasn’t for the Food Bank.”

And providing healthy meals… nutritious meals… enough to sustain. It’s not only providing a basic necessity. It’s providing happiness. It’s quality time, family time. You’re nourishing the body by the basic necessity, but you’re also nourishing the heart, the soul. Just by providing the security, the happiness… the happiness that I saw on my child’s face is priceless in itself. Just together, the quality time, what we’re able to do together, it’s much more than providing a basic necessity. We are not numbers. This is our life.”
By the time you read this, a few weeks will have passed since the derecho devastated urban and rural Iowa. After 10 million acres of croplands were damaged, hundreds of thousands of homes were without power, internet or water, and an estimated $4 billion in overall damage later, we are again reminded of why we do the work we do. If there was ever any question in your mind as to why we need food banks to exist, we hope that's no longer up for debate.

Now, imagine living paycheck to paycheck, in the middle of a pandemic, and then a land-hurricane comes through town. Unfortunately, many of our northeast Iowa neighbors don't need to imagine it, because this is their reality. So the morning after reality set in, and the damage was being assessed, we immediately began reaching out and responding to our nearby communities in need.

Beginning with our neighbors to the south, residents of Grundy County were quick to mobilize and gauge their communities needs. We have ensured extra food can be delivered, and through a partnership with Operation Threshold in Grundy Center, shelf stable items have been readily made available to those in need. Though they estimated that their need would only be temporary, through our existing partnerships and our regular monthly Mobile Food Pantry, we will be ready for whomever seeks assistance.

Heading further south into Tama County, the situation at the onset looks to be grim. Nearly every one of the county's 17,000 residents felt the derecho's wrath, with flattened houses, corn fields, and tree-littered intersections everywhere you look, and as a result, officials have delayed the start of schools, to focus on what immediate rebuilding can be done. With 200 extra families seeking assistance at our Tama Mobile Food Pantry in the initial months of the pandemic, we now see 350 families attend. In light of the last few weeks, we only expect this number to rise. Because of this, we have drastically increased both the amount of food and the frequency that we distribute it, through three Mobile Food Pantries taking place in the span of just four weeks. To put this into perspective, the average Mobile Food Pantry operates monthly.

Going yet another county further, at our service-area's southernmost boundry, is Poweshiek County. The stories coming out of here are heartbreaking to say the least. With property and farm loss of their own to show, these residents are also dealing with the tragic reality of human loss as well. Our hearts go out to these incredible communities, and we are forever thankful to those stepping up to the challenge to provide support for those in need as well. Our amazing partners at the Montezuma Food Pantry were quick to share their food with the temporary pantry that was immediately set up in Grinnell, as the city's primary pantry was rendered unable to operate due to the storm. We have since made multiple deliveries to the pop-up shelter, and continue to appreciate the time and energy Grinnell residents are investing to keep their neighbors sheltered and fed.

The last disaster relief effort to share with you, involves the communities that surround our service area. As you may have seen, the Cedar Rapids community was again in the eye of yet another major Iowa catastrophe. Following the derecho's aftermath in and around Linn County, our sister food bank, HACAP (Hawkeye Area Community Action Program), was left without power and communications. Due to this, their frozen and refrigerated food had to be temporarily stored in their refrigerated trucks, hence leaving them without reliable food transportation they needed to serve their community. With that, we sent them one of our refrigerated vans, and followed that with 31 pallets of protein, produce and water, with Feeding America providing a truck to cover the transportation. And when their generators came back on, we sent an additional semi, filled to the brim with 80,000 eggs that Fareway had donated to us earlier this month. All of this is to say that we know the importance of a having fully-functioning disaster-relief operation, so we were glad to help a fellow Food Bank when they needed it.

A few months back we told you that your support would define what our emergency response efforts would look like, and that we needed your support more than ever. We knew that was true, but we had no idea just how true that would become. Because of your support, we were able to weather the initial onslaught of the Coronavirus pandemic AND still provide for our community and our neighboring communities when yet another emergency response was needed.

The truth is, we still need you more than ever. And we don't see that changing anytime soon. Because your support doesn't just help us prepare for the unexpected - it puts us in a position to lead through it.

Emerging Stronger

IN THE AFTERMATH OF A DERECHO

WE WILL COME OUT OF THIS STRONGER.
Growing Goodness

A TESTIMONY OF FOOD RESCUE

Arrive at the end of a Farmer’s Market in the Cedar Valley, and you might spot more than a last minute deal on cucumbers. An orange van inscribed with its purpose, and a team of workers with a pile of boxes and a cart. This is the food rescue team from the Northeast Iowa Food Bank.

Fresh produce doesn't last forever, something the sellers at Farmer’s Markets are more than aware of. But, instead of it going to waste, the food takes a different route, into the hands and homes of clients of the Cedar Valley Food Pantry. Four of seven days a week, volunteers are hard at work making sure the abundance of summer vegetables get packed up to be distributed by the pantry at the NEIFB in the following days.

The rotating selection of vegetables keeps things interesting for clients, adding interest and variety to the regular staples that the pantry has available each week, bringing a pop of color to the carts that volunteers pack into cars that pull up at the Cedar Valley Food Pantry.

The journey starts in the halls and offices of the Food Bank building, gathering boxes and supplies in preparation of the task ahead. Loading up the iconic orange van, teams of two head out, armed with their personal protective masks and determination. But food rescue isn't just hard work. It's also fun!

Volunteers get a chance to browse markets for local wares, just before the end of the market approaches. We want to make sure vendors get every chance to sell their vegetables before donating, so being able to browse the markets is a treat for sellers and volunteers alike. Just before they pack up, teams move through the market, checking if vendors have anything left over. It’s packed up, weighed, and a receipt is given to every vendor, unless they wish to remain anonymous. After the van is packed up, it’s back to the food bank, where produce is stored in a temperature controlled fridge to be included alongside the offerings in the next few days at the pantry.

In many ways, the Farmer’s Market pickup is a symbiotic relationship between local providers and the Food Bank. Without the pickups, growers would be forced to throw away produce that they simply won’t be able to sell in time.

Kelly Moore, who organizes the Cedar Valley Farmer’s Markets, frequently donates produce to the Food Bank. She doesn’t have refrigeration equipment for her produce, so it can be tricky to keep things fresh for an extended period of time. If she wasn’t able to donate, Kelly says she would have to compost her vegetables, attempt to save it, or reach out and find people to give it to. But instead of having to put in those extra hours and effort, she knows she can rely on the Food Bank, saving her a trip home to deal with food that might go to waste. It’s also gratifying to be able to help people in need, and she prefers that the extra is going to others instead of being wasted.

Ultimately, Farmer’s Market Food Rescue is about community. Not every week will yield hundreds of pounds rescued, or dozens of vegetables saved. But every week is a chance for the Food Bank and its volunteers to stay connected to providers in our own community. These are the people growing local produce, and they care about feeding people, be that in pounds sold or donated. By developing and nurturing relationships to providers, we knit our community closer, and keep food in the mouths of those who need it the most.

“I can’t believe part of my [volunteer] job is to go around to farmer’s markets!”

- NEIFB Food Rescue Volunteer

One volunteer recounts his disbelief in being able to help out the food bank in such an entertaining way. “I can’t believe part of my job is to go around to farmer’s markets!” Volunteers eagerly sign up for the task. Being able to nourish people and have a great time while doing it is so valuable, and helps refresh volunteers and keep them from burning out or overworking themselves.
Honorariums

Marcia Banyas by Patti Atwater
All Iowans by Roderick & Nancy Bakken
St. Times United Methodist by Kathryn Baxter
Bev Dirrecks by Margaret Browne
Our 50th Wedding Anniversary by Carl & Gloria Campbell
Bobbi Kazenelson by Margaret Browne
Bev Dirrecks by Kathryn Baxter
St. Timothy Lutheran Church by Robert Gremmels & Beth Olson

Memorials

Michael Adams by Barbara Adams
Joel Allison by Edward Benish
Angie Amundson by Don & Diane Barfels
Russell & Shirley Anthony by Donna Puk
Robert Ball by Jean Bacon
Faye Barr, Sister by Carol Goddard
Tamra Bartelt by Libby & Rick Vanderwall
Donald & Regina Beenken by Robert & Jean Bellis
Earl & Mary Bellis by Robert & Jean Bellis
Micheal T. Berger & Family by David B. Katcher
Aaron Berns by Gregory Berns
Joel Berry by Rebecca Berry
Jillian and Jenna making masks for the community! by Catherine Showalter
Kenneth & Sharon Mervin by Mal & Joan Soderquist
St. Paul's United Methodist Church by Merrill & Claudia Siler
Megan Webber by Victoria Shepherd
Karen Suich by Victoria Shepherd
Dave Stage by Victoria Shepherd
Nicole by Gary Shock
Jillian and Jenna making masks for the community! by Catherine Showalter
Kenneth & Sharon Mervin by Mal & Joan Soderquist
St. Paul's United Methodist Church by Merrill & Claudia Siler
Megan Webber by Victoria Shepherd
Karen Suich by Victoria Shepherd
Dave Stage by Victoria Shepherd
Nicole by Gary Shock
Thank You

AFSCME Council 61 Local 2998
AFSCME Local 3489
BankIowa
Board of Realtors
Brewer's
Candesco Church
CBE Companies
Cedar Falls Band Boosters
Cedar Valley Community Church
Cedar Valley United Way
Center for Corporation
Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa
-Chickasaw County Community Foundation
-Community Foundation of Butler County
-Community Foundation of Grundy County
-Community Foundation of Howard County
-Kevin and Beth McCrandle fund
-Leighty Fund for Food Rescue Coordinator
-Leighty Fund for Double up Food Bucks.
-Buchanan County Community Foundation
-BeemerCounty/Readlyn Community Foundations
-Beemer County/Readlyn
-Community Foundation of Tama County
-Community Foundation Winneshiek County
CUNA Mutual Group
Delta Dental of Iowa
Distek Integration Inc
Emergency Food & Shelter Program
Farmers State Bank
Feeding America
-Jeff Bezos
-General COVID
-Great American Milk Drive
-Wells Fargo-FH Holiday Campaign
-TPX Foundation
-TPX Match for 2019 Holiday Campaign
-Walmart/Sam's Club 2020
-FY20 Casseys
-FY20 Sabra Loves to Help
-Wells Fargo-FY20 Wells Fargo
-Pampered Chef
-Subway-FY20 Footlong Campaign-
-Corona Brands 2020
-Nestle
Fertilizer Dealer Supply
First Baptist Church of Waterloo
First Citizens Bank
First Maxfield
First Presbyterian Church
Flint Hills Resources, LLC
Fogdall Family Foundation
Fremont Farms of Iowa, LLP
GMT Corporation
Gordon Flesch Charitable Foundation Inc
Grace Lutheran
Hudson Church Emergency Fund
Hy-Vee Chemical Co
IDEX Foundation
InFaith Community Foundation
International Paper-Waterloo Container
Iowa Assoc of Realtors Foundations
Iowa Food Bank Association
-Iowa Farm Bureau
-Tollgen

Sack Lunches are BACK! For only $8, a delicious pulled pork sandwich (thanks Blue Barn BBQ!), fruit, a side, a bag of chips, water & dessert will be delivered to employees at participating businesses in the Cedar Valley and surrounding areas, on September 24th & 25th. To learn more, call us at 319-235-0507 or visit www.SackLunchDelivery.com, and place your order today!

September is a month where people all over the United States stand together to fight hunger. This year, Hunger Action Month looks a little different. With the Coronavirus-related risks involved in hosting live events, we will be primarily focused on delivering high quality content online, to both educate the public and raise awareness to the issue of hunger.

We’ll be releasing our brand new “I’m Hungry For Change” crewneck sweatshirts (Warning: These Are Extremely Comfy), posting our favorite recipe’s and food hacks, partnering with local restaurants to hold special “Give Back” nights, sharing stories from staff, clients, and volunteers, and so much more! We hope you’ll tune in throughout September, for a one-of-a-kind Hunger Action Month!

NOW ACCEPTING SACK LUNCH ORDERS!