



A Place at the Table

NEWSLETTER OF THE RHODE ISLAND COMMUNITY FOOD BANK

SUMMER 2011

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Mission: The Rhode Island Community Food Bank provides food to people in need and promotes long-term solutions to the problem of hunger.



www.rifoodbank.org

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Working Full Time, Struggling to Stay Ahead Food Pantry Client Grateful for Help

It was only a few years ago that Ellen Gourse considered herself to be living comfortably. She and her husband enjoyed evenings out and an occasional movie. Since then her life has changed significantly. She now turns to a food pantry for help.

After 25 years, Ellen's husband ended their marriage, setting off a chain of events that enormously impacted her situation. "I never thought I'd be divorced, and I didn't expect to have these struggles," she began. "We both worked and we owned our home, which we had to sell as part of the divorce."

Following the divorce, Ellen had her hours at work cut back. "I was working half as many hours, and that's when I could start to see the writing on the wall. I began to fall behind."

As she struggled to pay her bills and buy food, Ellen could no longer afford her rent and had no choice but to move out of her apartment. Without a place to call home, Ellen stayed with friends before applying for the subsidized housing she lives in today.

During this transition, Ellen never stopped working. "I've worked my entire life," she said proudly. "The longest I ever spent not working was the first 7 months of my daughter's life—and that was 25 years ago."

Despite her full-time job with benefits, Ellen does not earn enough to pay her bills and afford the food she needs. That's when she made the difficult decision to visit a food pantry for help. "The first time I went I was ashamed, embarrassed," she described.

At The Louis and Goldie Chester Full Plate Kosher Food Pantry in Providence, a Member Agency of the Food Bank, Ellen gets the food assistance she needs to supplement what she's able to buy at the supermarket. "I budget maybe \$20 a week for food, which isn't a lot. I'll go to the pantry once or twice a month to help fill the gap."

Ellen is part of the growing population of working poor Rhode Islanders turning to food pantries for help. Now, rising food and fuel prices are making it even harder for low-income families to make ends meet.

"It costs more to fill my gas tank, which I need to do to get to work," Ellen explained. "I don't go out much, and I consolidate my trips whenever possible. I'll buy less food and change where I shop if it saves me money. Even if you're working, it doesn't mean you can afford everything you need."



Ellen Gourse works full-time and still needs to visit The Louis and Goldie Chester Full Plate Kosher Food Pantry to make ends meet.

“Even if you’re working, it doesn’t mean you can afford everything you need.”

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FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Challenged by Higher Fuel Costs



While there are many types of economic indicators, some promising better times ahead, I look at the lines of people at emergency food pantries and soup kitchens. Unfortunately, the lines are longer than they have ever been. So far, there are few signs of economic recovery in the communities served by the Food Bank.

Those who lost their jobs during the recession continue to experience the uncertainty, stress and severe financial hardship of long-term unemployment. And now more and more people with jobs struggle to pay their bills due to the extraordinarily high cost of fuel. Limited

options—to purchase food for the family or fill up the gas tank—face thousands of Rhode Islanders who have little choice when the car is the only way to get to work.

High fuel costs also impact the Food Bank. We receive food donations from companies outside of Rhode Island through the national organization, Feeding America. These donated truckloads of cereal, canned goods and fresh produce make up 25 percent of the food that we acquire. Although donated, this food is not free, since the Food Bank must pay to transport the food from out-of-state. As fuel prices go up, we have no choice but to absorb these higher shipping costs along with the increased expense of delivering food to our Member Agencies across the state.

With over 55,000 Rhode Islanders seeking food assistance each month, we cannot allow higher fuel costs to curtail the acquisition or distribution of donated food. The Food Bank can strive to keep costs down by operating as efficiently as possible and by directing food to those who need it the most, but we also must depend on our loyal supporters to help us meet this new challenge. Each and every day, I am humbled by your generosity that makes it possible for the Food Bank to respond to historic levels of need. Your dedication is the best indicator of the true strength of the Rhode Island community.

Andrew Schiff, Chief Executive Officer

Record Number Receive SNAP Food Assistance

During May 2011, more than 15% of Rhode Islanders, 160,000 people, participated in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as Food Stamps), ensuring that low-income households get the food they need. This is the highest number on record.



Plug-In to the Food Bank

There's always a lot happening at the Food Bank. Stay up to date on news and events by becoming a fan on Facebook and following us on Twitter.

Twitter: @RIFoodBank
Facebook: facebook.com/RICFB



Food Bank Thanks Outgoing Board President for Years of Service

The Food Bank extends sincere appreciation to **Father Frank Sevola** for his years of dedicated service to our Board of Directors. Father Frank joined the Board in 2004 and became President in 2008.

For the past nine years, Father Frank has been a fixture in Rhode Island as Guardian and Director of the Franciscan Ministries in Providence. Per the Ministries' Provincial Statutes, nine years is the limit for serving as a Guardian in any one community. As a result, Father Frank is relocating to Pompton Lakes, New Jersey.

As he leaves Rhode Island, Father Frank reflects on the Food Bank's work. "I am proud to have served an organization that is so committed to the people it helps and does so with high integrity."

President-Elect Joseph J. MarcAurele will assume the role of President of the Board of Directors at this year's Annual Meeting in October. Joe, a long-time supporter of the Food Bank, is the Chairman, President and CEO of The Washington Trust Company and has often been recognized for his involvement in the community.



Nothing Gets High Honor

In June, our Nothing Can End Hunger campaign won a gold Effie Award for effectiveness in advertising—the advertising industry's highest honor! Special thanks to NAIL, Citizens Bank and all our partners who made it happen.



Better to Give Than to Receive

Instead of Birthday Gifts, 10-Year-Old Asks for Donations to Help the Hungry

Two years ago, Ari Stein visited the Food Bank to learn about the problem of hunger. Feeling inspired, he decided to donate the \$2.30 in his pocket. "It made me happy to do something that would help someone else," Ari recalls.

He recently celebrated his 10th birthday, and decided that he didn't need any gifts. Instead, Ari put donations to the Food Bank at the top of his wish list. As a result, friends and family donated more than \$100 in his honor.

"I've been going through a growth spurt and my parents say I eat so much they have to go to the market extra times. It got me thinking about all the people who have trouble getting food."

Ari hopes his act of kindness inspires others, particularly young people, to get involved with the Food Bank. "It's important to help people get the things they need—like food. I know I'd feel horrible if I didn't know when I'd be able to eat."



Food Matters

Mark Bittman Event A Delicious Success

On May 5th *New York Times* columnist and cookbook author Mark Bittman joined us at Food Matters, an event that raised more than \$90,000 in support of our work!

At the Johnson & Wales Culinary Arts Museum, Mr. Bittman mingled with guests, signed copies of his best-selling books and gave a presentation on the role food plays in our culture—exploring the links between food, health and the environment. The evening also featured some of Mark’s mouth-watering recipes specially created by Pinelli’s Café at Night.



Throughout the event, Mark Bittman chatted with guests and signed copies of his best-selling cookbooks.



ABOVE: Food Bank CEO Andrew Schiff and Mark Bittman pose with Food Matters co-chairs Meredith and Joseph MarcAurele.



RIGHT: Food Bank supporters David and Kristen Gower, who also served on the event committee, enjoy Food Matters.

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Striking Out Hunger

Citizens Bank, the PawSox and Cox Step to the Plate to Help Hungry Kids



Andrew Schiff, Food Bank CEO, Barbara Cottam, Head of Corporate Affairs for Citizens Financial Group, Amy Quinn, Director of Communications at Cox Communications and PawSox VP & General Manager Lou Schwechheimer make their pitch at "Striking Out Hunger."

A strikeout can be one of the most exciting plays in baseball. For the Rhode Island Community Food Bank, it's certainly our favorite! That's because Citizens Bank Foundation, the Pawtucket Red Sox and Cox Communications have one again teamed up for their "Striking Out Hunger" campaign.

Throughout the entire 2011 baseball season, Citizens Bank Foundation will donate \$75 to the Food Bank, up to \$75,000, each time a PawSox pitcher strikes out an opposing batter. The money raised will support Kids Cafe, a program that serves wholesome evening meals to children at high risk of hunger.

You, too, can get involved. Visit www.rifoodbank.org/strikeout and show your support for "Striking Out Hunger" by making an online donation.

Working Full Time, Struggling to Stay Ahead

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According to Susan Adler, Director of The Full Plate, there has been a noticeable change among those who seek help. "We see a lot of people who are working, but not making enough to afford their needs," she described. "The rising prices of food and fuel have had big impacts on people's budgets. So, they turn to food pantries for help."

When asked if she's surprised by her struggles, despite having a full-time job, Ellen didn't hesitate. "It would have surprised me years ago, but not anymore. I know too many people in similar situations."

"You just don't know what's going on in someone else's life. It doesn't matter who you are, how old you are, or what religion you are—things can happen."

Community Kitchen Students Gain Experience Through Internships

To help low-income adults find gainful employment, the Food Bank offers Community Kitchen, a culinary job-training program. Students spend 14-weeks learning the skills necessary to prepare them for jobs in the food service industry under the guidance of two professional chefs. As a way of gaining valuable work experience, students in the program intern at local restaurants, hotels, corporate and institutional kitchens. Thank you to these establishments for hosting students recently:

- The Capital Grille
- Colonel Blackinton Inn
- Crowne Plaza Hotel
- Dave's Marketplace
- EPOCH Senior Living on Blackstone Boulevard
- Hasbro
- Little Sisters of the Poor
- The Locals
- Rhode Island Hospital
- Sovereign Bank
- Temple Restaurant
- West Bay Manor



Eric Frappier works at EPOCH Senior Living on Blackstone Boulevard.

Vegetable Stuffed Baked Potato

(4 servings)

- 4 medium baking potatoes (about 9–10 oz. each)
- 6 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion (red or white) chopped
- 2 cups spinach, chopped, frozen, defrosted
- Salt, pepper

Clean the potatoes and prick with a fork in several places. Bake at 400F for about 1 hour. Once the potatoes have been in the oven for about 40 minutes, start the following:

1. Heat the olive oil on medium.
2. Stir in the onions. Season with salt and pepper. Cook for about 5 minutes or until they are soft. Add the spinach. Keep heat on low until the potatoes are cooked.

Once the potatoes are done, slice and fill with the vegetables.

This recipe can be made with any vegetables you like, or those you have leftover from other meals.

Approximate cost for the recipe: \$2.89 or \$0.72 per serving.



Nutrition Education Helps Newport Brothers Eat Better



Brothers Frank and John McCauley eat better and feel great.

As brothers, Frank and John McCauley share a lot in common. They're both widowed, retired, living on fixed incomes and clients of the Salvation Army of Newport Food Pantry. Unfortunately, they also shared poor eating habits and limited cooking skills.

"I was a TV dinner and sandwich guy," said Frank. John agreed, saying, "I'd throw something in the microwave and that would be dinner. I didn't cook, and certainly didn't get into vegetables and the good parts of food that I should have."

Thankfully, that all changed as a result of the Food Bank's nutrition education efforts. At Newport Housing's Donovan Manor, the brothers participated in Raising the Bar on Nutrition, a Food Bank-sponsored nutrition education program.

The program focuses on helping low-income individuals and families create healthy, affordable meals using ingredients found at food pantries. Workshops



include cooking demonstrations and practical nutrition information. Participants also receive recipes and ingredients to recreate the meals at home.

"We want to show how a diet rich in vegetables, canned or fresh, along with whole grains, can improve your health," said Mary Beth Winter, who taught the

Gardens Growing Fresh Produce and Building Community

workshops that Frank and John attended. "For low-income individuals and families, replacing meat with other protein-rich foods like beans can not only be better for you, but can also help you save money."

"I get SNAP benefits and have definitely noticed them going further when I shop," commented Frank. "I'm buying less meat and I make sure to utilize the canned goods I get from the food pantry for many of the meals I've learned to prepare."

While changing your eating habits can be difficult, Frank and John have fully embraced what they've learned. "I'm amazed at some of the things I've liked that I wouldn't have tried before. I'm getting nutrients now that I know I wasn't before," described Frank. "Sometimes I'll just improvise and mix up different vegetables with brown rice and some olive oil," added John.

Both brothers have seen noticeable changes in how they feel, as well as in their waistlines. John has lost close to ten pounds, while Frank feels stronger and less tired than before.

Friends and family members of the brothers are also eating better. "My daughter has changed how she eats as a result of the meals we've prepared together. In fact, my grandkids are joining us more now and are eating foods I never saw them eat before," Frank said.

The Food Bank hopes to expand its nutrition education efforts by partnering with additional Member Agencies across the state to offer workshops and cooking demonstrations.

"I'm really proud of what my brother and I have done and how we've adapted the program to our everyday lives," said John. "I can't say enough about the program. It's changed our lives," added Frank.

For more nutritious recipes, go to www.rifoodbank.org.

It's the midst of the growing season, and community gardens are in full swing across the state. In Bristol, Cumberland, Smithfield and Woonsocket, thousands of tomato, squash and pepper seedlings have been planted in plots of land dedicated to growing produce for the hungry.

Each site is completely managed by a volunteer coordinator who recruits teams of people to help with every aspect of the garden's operation. From planting, weeding, watering and harvesting, to delivering the crops to the Food Bank and local food pantries, volunteers are getting their hands dirty and making a difference.

Throughout the rest of the summer, and into the fall, volunteer support for community gardens is essential. Individuals and groups are welcome, and since there's no minimum age requirement, volunteering can be a great family activity!



In Cumberland, Franklin Farm got started with help from more than 100 local students who planted thousands of vegetable seedlings in early June.

Garden Volunteers Needed

Franklin Farm in Cumberland hosts open volunteer nights from 5:30 p.m. to dusk each Monday and Thursday through September. For more information, contact Denise Mudge at denisemudge@gmail.com or visit www.franklinfarmri.org.

The Magaziner Farm, located in Bristol, is looking for volunteers to help with weed maintenance and to assist with harvesting later in the season. To help, contact Ray Sabourin, the site's coordinator, at saboray41@cox.net.

Help Fill the Hunger Gap by Supporting the Summer Food Drive

Campaign Continues Through August 31st

When most people think of summer they envision beautiful weather, vacations, trips to the beach and children playing outdoors. Unfortunately, for many Rhode Island families, it's also a time of increased hunger.

During the school year, thousands of low-income Rhode Island children are fed through the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs. Over the summer, students lack access to these programs and their families must stretch already strained household budgets to fill the meal gap.

"For many kids, the only meals they get are the ones they receive in school," said Andrew Schiff, Chief Executive Officer of the Food Bank. "That's why our Summer Food Drive is so critical."

The Summer Food Drive, sponsored by Ocean State Job Lot, Galaxy Foods and the Arpin Family, helps struggling families during the summer months when demand for food assistance remains high. We are calling on the community to help us meet this demand by collecting 150,000 pounds of food by the end of August.

Join the effort by dropping off food donations or by organizing a food drive in your workplace or neighborhood. We can provide posters and boxes to support your collection.

For more information, contact Farris Maxwell at (401) 942-6325 or fmaxwell@rifofoodbank.org.

You can also participate by making a financial donation at: www.rifofoodbank.org/SummerFoodDrive.



The School Breakfast & Lunch Programs feed thousands of Rhode Island children throughout the school year. During the summer, kids lack access to programs, creating a meal gap for low-income families.



Most Needed Items

Canned Vegetables & Fruits, Peanut Butter, Cereal, Rice, Chili, Soups & Stews, Macaroni & Cheese, Tomato Sauce, Pasta, Tuna

Donations may be brought to the Food Bank: 200 Niantic Avenue, Providence, Monday-Friday: 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.



Former Food Editor Makes Sweet Rollover for Giving

Donna Lee Maximizes her Food Bank Donation While Avoiding Taxes

Honorary Food Bank Board Member and former *Providence Journal* food editor Donna Lee has long been a supporter of the Food Bank. This year Donna and her husband took advantage of current legislation allowing a charitable contribution from an IRA to be made completely tax-free.

The Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization and Job Creation Act of 2010 extended the IRA Charitable Rollover for 2011. This allows individuals age 70½ and older to make direct transfers



totaling up to \$100,000 per year to 501(c)(3) charities, without having to count the transfers as income for federal income tax purposes. In addition, a rollover donation counts toward your required minimum distribution.

"I like to donate to charities such as the Food Bank with a tax-free transfer from my IRA," says Donna. "It means more money for the Food Bank, no taxes for me. Suppose your combined federal and state tax rate is 33%. If you withdraw \$1,000 of income from your IRA, you pay \$330 in taxes and net \$670.

Then you have only \$670 to donate to the Food Bank. Wouldn't you be happier if that \$330 also went to the Food Bank instead of the IRS?" asks Donna.

"I'm happy about saving on taxes and happy to help the Food Bank provide food to Rhode Islanders in need. The Food Bank is very efficient in using its donations to combat hunger in Rhode Island. It's a goal I care about deeply. The more I can help, the better I feel. And, I can't bear to think of people going hungry."

To learn more about making an IRA charitable rollover visit www.rifofoodbank.org/IRA.