If I can put a smile on someone’s face, then I’ve done a good job.”

- BARB

There’s a saying I try to live by: I will do everything I can for as many people as I can for as long as I can,” said Barb, 71, a dedicated Foodbank volunteer who joined the organization after retiring in 2019. Barb was looking for a way to stay active, while also making a positive impact in the community.

Serving others is very personal for Barb. After losing her son 12 years ago, she was seeking an opportunity to channel the courage, strength and compassion her son had exemplified. “I needed that in my life again. I needed to know I was fulfilling something.”

Barb has made a tremendous impact at the Foodbank. She volunteers 2-3 days per week and is willing to help wherever needed. You can spot her in the volunteer center sorting food items while dancing and singing with the ‘A Team.’ “The people I’ve met here are like family. And we feel like what we’re doing really has a purpose. We’re part of something much bigger than ourselves.”

Barb also works at the front desk in Akron, serves families at grocery distributions, works on special projects for various departments, and most recently, began volunteering at the Keith D. Monda Family Food Pantry at the Stark County Campus.

The Foodbank is so grateful for Barb and all the volunteers who help support local hunger-relief efforts. We couldn’t do this work without their support. Thank you!
The Wooster Hope Center is a dedicated partner serving rural families in Wayne County. Celebrating 10 years of service last year, the program has grown exponentially and continues to find innovative ways to offer help to residents.

The pantry originated as a hygiene pantry. A few months into serving the community, the founding members realized food was also a necessity. “We wanted to be a part of the solution,” said founding member and Executive Director Richard Frazier. Soon, the Wooster Hope Center partnered with the Foodbank to offer a Direct Distribution (DD). DDs distribute large quantities of fresh, perishable food to communities in need. Because of the generosity of Foodbank donors, the transportation and cost of food is free for the food program.

Feeding the community became the primary focus of Wooster Hope Center. The organization opened a food pantry and hot meal program. It also serves vulnerable residents, children and senior citizens, through backpacks of food distributed to 13 elementary schools each month, and shelf-stable, nutritious food boxes for seniors on a limited income.

“We’ve seen a big change from when we opened to now. More and more seniors are on fixed incomes and are having a difficult time making ends meet. We need to focus more on them right now and figure out a better way to serve them.”

And the Wooster Hope Center plans to do just that with its new mobile pantry. Richard realized acquiring a vehicle of their own could help them access communities in need more easily. The pop-up pantry plans to visit assisted living centers, low-income housing for seniors, etc. to meet people where they are, overcoming the obstacle of transportation.

And because of the waiver on all cost sharing fees last year, the organization was able to make capital improvements to its facility.

“The Foodbank has blessed us with free food in 2021, and that, partnered with generous local support from donors, has afforded us the opportunity to get a new roof, garage door, repair our dock and add solar panels, and we are very thankful for that!”

WOOSTER HOPE CENTER CONTINUES TO EVOLVE TO BETTER SERVE ITS RESIDENTS

The line for the pantry wrapped around the building as families waited for nourishing food.

Frank, a volunteer, is happy to help out his neighbors in need.

Wooster Hope Center Executive Director Richard Frazier loads cars with food at their distribution.
A NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND CEO

After a challenging year in 2020, in which we were all stretched beyond our limits, thankfully, 2021 unveiled the light at the end of the tunnel. Early in the year, we began to see a return to pre-pandemic numbers of families seeking emergency food assistance from our network of hunger-relief partners. We believe additional temporary government benefits and expedited vaccination distribution resulted in a lessening of demand.

As the demand slowly eased, it allowed your Foodbank and the hundreds of pantries, hot meal sites, shelters, children and senior programs within our network to catch our breath, to recalibrate and focus on building a stronger, more collaborative and sustainable network. Partnering with DoorDash and pantries in our network, we delivered food directly to people who were homebound; we listened to the network’s needs and through grant support, began delivering food orders directly to food programs, saving them time and resources; and focusing on the correlation between hunger and health, new partnerships with local health systems and hunger-relief partners emerged.

And because of the overwhelming generosity of our community, we were able to waive all cost sharing fees for food in 2021 allowing partners to invest in their capacity and other resources to better serve our community.

Additionally in 2021, we celebrated a historic occasion as we opened the new Stark County Campus. Our vision to increase regional capacity for fresh food distribution, expand our reach into communities of need, and engage thousands more volunteers in the local fight against hunger became a reality with this brand-new purpose-built facility. If you haven’t toured the new campus, we invite you to visit us anytime.

As we embark on 2022, the future is bright. Despite continuing increases in the cost of food paired with labor shortages, supply chain issues and increased transportation costs, the last two years have shown us what we’re capable of — what we can accomplish when we all work together.

While we know that 13 percent of individuals within our service area may still experience food insecurity this year, our work will continue as we seek to ensure everyone in our community has access to safe and nourishing food. We will remain diligent in this fight. With your support, we know we can continue to change the history of hunger relief.

Daniel R. Flowers, President & CEO

FREEZE OUT HUNGER AT THE POLAR BEAR JUMP

Help fight hunger across our region by taking the icy plunge in the Polar Bear Jump on February 26, 2022 presented by the Portage Lakes Polar Bear Club. If plunging into frigid waters is not for you, help our neighbors facing hunger by collecting pledges.

For details and to register, visit portagelakespolarbearclub.com.
The Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization recognized by the IRS. If you know anyone who might be interested in receiving this newsletter, or if you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please contact the Marketing Department at info@acrfb.org or 330.535.6900.

Terry Link
CHAIR

Amanda Montgomery
VICE CHAIR

Maureen DeSanzo
SECRETARY

Greg Long
TREASURER

Bill Artman
Lisa Backlin
Jim Bowen

Rob Bowers
Alison Breaux
Jerod Cherry
Rich Clark
Kristin Hannon
Teri Lash-Ritter
Alicia LaMancusa

Annie McCauley
Amanda Montgomery
Jill Penrose
Laura Query
Bill Shivers
Jonathan Thornton
Dan Flowers

PRESIDENT & CEO

Harvest for Hunger is your Foodbank’s largest fundraising campaign and helps support food distribution all year long. 100 percent of every dollar raised in this campaign goes directly to providing free food for individuals and families in need in our local community.

For more information, visit akroncantonfoodbank.org/hfh.

Make the biggest impact possible for families and children facing hunger by joining the Sustainer Circle. This monthly giving program consists of a special group of faithful Foodbank friends who help families struggling with hunger by making monthly donations.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS
• Receive less mail
• Less mail = reduced costs for your Foodbank
• Printing less = environmentally friendly
• Better budgeting = planning for our future

CHECK OUT HUNGER
Scan a $10, $5 or $1 donation coupon each time you visit a participating supermarket or GetGo gas station.

HOST A FOOD AND FUNDS DRIVE
Collect food and financial donations for your Foodbank. $1 = 4 meals

HOST A VIRTUAL FOOD DRIVE
Create a personalized online fundraiser and share with your social networks.

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS
Please consider making a personal donation or a corporate gift.

JOIN THE HARVEST FOR HUNGER CAMPAIGN

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 26, 2022
Portage Lakes Polar Bear Jump

MARCH 1, 2022
Harvest for Hunger Campaign
Kick-off Breakfast

MARCH 6 - APRIL 16, 2022
Harvest for Hunger: Check Out Hunger

MARCH 29, 2022
30th Annual Celebrity Cuisine

FOR EVENT DETAILS, VISIT
akroncantonfoodbank.org/events

JOIN US!

Harvest for Hunger Campaign
Kick-off Breakfast
MARCH 1, 2022
Learn more at akroncantonfoodbank.org/hfh

The Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization recognized by the IRS. If you know anyone who might be interested in receiving this newsletter, or if you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please contact the Marketing Department at info@acrfb.org or 330.535.6900.