

Foodbank Focus

A publication of the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank
Spring 2025



AKRON-CANTON REGIONAL
**FOOD
BANK**

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akroncantonfoodbank.org

MAIN CAMPUS

350 Opportunity Pkwy
Akron, OH 44307

STARK COUNTY CAMPUS

1365 Cherry Ave. NE
Canton, OH 44714

SERVING 8 COUNTIES

Carroll, Holmes,
Medina, Portage, Stark,
Summit, Tuscarawas &
Wayne Counties



PARTNER
FOOD BANK OF
**FEEDING
AMERICA**



Every meal has a story. Meet Candy.

Candy is a hardworking, loving mother. Her family is at the heart of everything she does. When she's not at work, she cares for her 19-year-old daughter who has autism.

Her youngest daughter, Vicky, is a determined high school student. Vicky takes classes at a technical school and is a mentor at a preschool. She is also searching for a part-time job.

Candy started working at a large retailer 22 years ago. Her hourly wage is hard to live on. Residing in a rural area brings its own set of challenges. With few job opportunities nearby, Candy has limited options to seek better-paying work. Her income is slightly above the threshold to qualify for food assistance or Medicaid benefits.

In addition to paying for utilities and her home, her family has accumulated medical debt. Candy pays \$800 every month for medical bills. Little is left for groceries.

"Regardless of how much you try, you can never get ahead," Candy shares. Yet,

her love for her family keeps pushing her forward, even on the hardest days.

Her oldest daughter is a selective eater due to her autism, and Candy works hard to ensure both her children have the meals they need to thrive.

"When it comes down to the nitty-gritty, I do what I need to do for my kids."

Candy's local food pantry has become a place where she finds not only food but also kindness and hope. The pantry helps her fill in the gaps when her paycheck doesn't stretch far enough.

She loads her shopping cart with meat, dairy, pantry staples, bakery items, and even hygiene items that can be expensive at the store.

Thank you for supporting your Foodbank and families like Candy's. We couldn't do this work without you!

Leave a legacy and help feed future generations

The Foodbank provided more meals in 2024 than any other year in the organization's history. All this work is possible because of our supporters — donors who give generously year after year. Continued investment in the Foodbank is essential, so it can serve as a cornerstone of hope and stability in our community, today and tomorrow.

"Looking ahead, it's vital to protect and sustain the investments the community has made in hunger relief so far. The next step is to continue building an endowment that will protect the community's past investments, sustain this important organization, and give it the resources to be flexible, enduring and resilient — because food insecurity isn't going away," said Colleen, chief development officer.

An investment in the Foodbank's endowment will help support critical capital and program investments and innovations and pilot projects after grant funding is no longer available. Revenue from the endowment will also help ensure the organization's ability to respond quickly to challenges and opportunities.

“

To me, the Foodbank endowment is about coping with uncertainty. You have good times and bad times, but people need to eat every day. An endowment is a way of smoothing the curve. The Foodbank does great work, and this is a way to ensure this great work continues long into the future.”

Keith Monda

Foodbank donor, former national Feeding America board chair and Canton native



HOW ENDOWMENT WORKS

An endowment works like a permanent savings account for the Foodbank. The principal remains invested forever, while a portion of the earnings is used each year to support hunger-relief efforts. This ensures a sustainable, long-term funding source that grows over time.

Donors can support the endowment through outright gifts of cash, marketable securities, qualifying charitable distributions from an IRA and donor advised fund disbursements. Donors can also make deferred contributions through various estate planning techniques, such as beneficiary designations, bequests, trusts, successor clauses, life insurance or charitable gift annuities.

If you'd like to learn more about supporting the endowment, please contact Debra Hagarty at 330.535.6900. Your generosity today will ensure that no family goes hungry tomorrow. Whether you make a one-time current endowment gift or include the Foodbank in your estate plans, your contribution will ensure you leave a legacy, feeding future generations.



Give Today.

Help Feed Families.

akroncantonfoodbank.org/harvest

Volunteer spotlights

April is National Volunteer Month, an opportunity for the Foodbank to show its volunteers how special they are. Thank you, volunteers, for choosing to serve with the Foodbank. We appreciate you!



"Food brings us together"

Meet Terry and Jack. They've been married 13 years. The energetic couple knew they wanted to stay active after retirement. "We try to do our fair share for our community and we're no strangers to hard work," said Terry, who spent 40 years as an operating room nurse.

They began volunteering in 2021, first in the warehouse and then at drive-thru distributions. Terry mentioned how rewarding it was to directly serve people in need, to associate a face or family with their volunteer efforts.

When the drive-thru distributions ended and the pantry opened at the Main Campus in Akron, Terry and Jack quickly signed up for a weekly shift. "It gives me a sense of joy knowing that my hands, my gifts and talents, my energy and strength are being used to serve people," said Terry.

She fondly reflects on a time when a

woman shopping the pantry hugged her. "She said I had a beautiful smile and she was thankful I was there."

"These are our neighbors and they're like family. You get to know their stories and struggles, and food is our commonality — everyone has to eat."

Jack's heart is just as committed to the work, but volunteering at the Foodbank is a different experience for him. His family relied on government programs until he was in high school. "It's emotional for me knowing my family was in that position when I was young, so this work really means a lot to me."

Thank you, Jack and Terry, for loving our neighbors with open hearts each and every week!

Volunteer Impact in 2024



11,000
volunteers



74,000
hours of service



2.3M
meals provided



27%
of Foodbank's workforce



Thank you, Juli and Broadview Heating Air Conditioning & Electrical, for making such a commitment to local hunger relief. Organizations like yours truly make our community exceptional!

Building company culture through volunteerism

It was early 2020 when Broadview Heating Air Conditioning & Electrical set up an entire year of volunteer dates to engage their staff in volunteer service with the Foodbank. The pandemic derailed these plans, but when the volunteer center opened again, they were ready to roll up their sleeves and get to work.

Now, the organization visits the Foodbank every month so all 30 staff members can volunteer. Volunteering with the Foodbank has strengthened their company's culture. "It feels good

to help, but it's also a team-building experience and a chance for different departments, who don't typically work together every day, to bond and work toward one common goal," said Juli, co-owner of her family's business.

Being in the service industry, Juli feels volunteering at the Foodbank is a natural fit for her company. "We go into homes every single day and help. We see ourselves as helpers, as servants, and volunteering with the Foodbank is a different way for us to serve people."



“

One of the things we pride ourselves on is being a resource and guiding individuals, step by step if necessary, to help them access the support they need.”

*Anne Marie
Shepherd's House*

Homeless shelter serves Portage County

Several years ago, Anne Marie was overseeing a food pantry. One day, an open sign outside the pantry caught the attention of a woman driving by. Curious and in need, she stopped in. She explained that she was a mother of two who had recently lost her job and was living in her vehicle. She was struggling and unsure where to turn.

Anne Marie and the pantry provided a meal for her and her children and connected her with housing resources and employment opportunities.

Experiences like these inspire Anne Marie, who built her life and career dedicated to helping others. During that time, she noticed a gap in community services: people were homeless with nowhere to turn.

With the help of her community and other passionate individuals, Anne Marie opened Shepherd's House in 2022, a shelter in Portage County.

The shelter serves a diverse population, including families, children, teens and a growing number of older adults struggling to live on a fixed income.

“We're seeing an increase in the senior population. That really is concerning. We certainly don't need elderly people who are frail, sleeping outside in the cold,” said Anne Marie.

To address the unique challenges faced by their residents, Shepherd's House goes above and beyond to help individuals transition from emergency housing to stability and independence.

This often includes connecting older adults with part-time jobs that supplement their fixed incomes and helping them secure housing designed to serve seniors with low incomes.

Every shelter resident actively works toward securing employment and/or housing, and many also participate in counseling classes designed to prepare them for long-term success. Through partnerships with local community organizations, Shepherd's House creates a comprehensive support system that empowers residents to regain stability.

“One of the things we pride ourselves on is being a resource and guiding individuals, step by step if necessary,

to help them access the support they need,” Anne Marie said. “We give them the information, but they have to do the work.”



The shelter provides breakfast and dinner to ensure their residents have the food they need to thrive. Thanks to their partnership with the Foodbank, they are able to offer fresh, nutritious meals prepared by a retired volunteer chef who helps ensure they are unique and flavorful.

Shepherd's House continues to create hope and change for their community by providing nourishing meals and a pathway to stability. We're grateful for their partnership!

Food boxes provide older adults reliable nutrition

May is Older American's Month, a time to celebrate the contributions of older Americans while also examining the hardships they may face. Older adults have spent years working, contributing to their communities and building a future for younger generations. But unfortunately, thousands of older adults in our community are struggling to make ends meet.

For many older adults, living on a fixed income means making difficult decisions like choosing between medicine and meals or heat and groceries. Food insecurity among older adults can greatly affect their health and well-being, making it harder for them to live a healthy and fulfilling life.

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) helps ease these difficult decisions by providing a reliable source of nutritious food every month. Through the USDA-funded program, income eligible individuals aged 60 or older receive a 30-pound box of pantry staples — such as grains, canned meats, vegetables and fruits, juice and more — ensuring they have the foundation for balanced meals.

“

CSFP is a reliable source of various nutritious foods for older adults. These foods can be the building blocks for a healthy diet and can help them stretch their limited budgets. This program really helps serve a population in need.”

Amanda

Foodbank program coordinator

Each month, 1,700 CSFP food boxes are assembled at the Foodbank's Stark County Campus. Volunteers often decorate the boxes with cheerful drawings to brighten the day of its recipient. The boxes are then distributed through food programs within the Foodbank's network, some are delivered directly to the homes of older adults who have health or transportation barriers, and some are delivered to residential buildings specifically for older adults.

Thank you for supporting the Foodbank and the older adults who have given so much to our community.

1,700

**older adults
served monthly
through CSFP**



Connecting neighbors with support beyond food

Families experiencing food insecurity may face other hardships. Our neighbors may have to navigate challenges like unemployment, housing instability or health issues. The Foodbank is proud to partner with local organizations to offer wraparound support services through the resource rooms located within our two campuses.

In 2024, we connected more than 7,000 individuals with resources like job training, health support and legal aid.

Together, we can help support the whole person.

Main Campus

Greenleaf Family Center
Humane Society of Summit County
Stark State College
Summit County Department of
Job and Family Services
Unite Us
Vantage Aging
The Well CDC

Stark County Campus

ACCESS Health Stark
Aultman Working on Wellness
Beacon Charitable Pharmacy
Canton City Public Health
Community Legal Aid
Goodwill Industries of Greater Cleveland
and East Central Ohio, Inc.
Greater Stark County Urban League
Stark County Health Department
Stark County Job and Family Services

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Learn more about planned giving at acrfb.giftlegacy.com or call Debra Hagarty at 330.535.6900.

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