

Foodbank Focus

A publication of the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank

Winter 2026



AKRON-CANTON REGIONAL

**FOOD
BANK**

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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



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FOOD BANK OF
**FEEDING
AMERICA**



Every meal has a story. Meet Pansy.

Pansy is a hardworking, dedicated mother. She supports her two young children, a three-year-old boy and a seven-year-old girl. When her groceries begin to run low, Pansy visits the Foodbank's onsite food pantries a few times per month.

The support she receives has had a real impact on her family's day-to-day life. Packing two lunches every morning adds up quickly, especially with rising food prices. When her SNAP benefits were impacted last year, it became very difficult to make ends meet.

"Coming here has made such a difference," Pansy shared. "I'm able to make meals when I'm running low on groceries."

Pansy has previously volunteered at the Foodbank when she needed service hours for her job with Akron Public Schools.

What began as a requirement gradually became something more meaningful to her — a chance to give back to the very place that has helped her family.

"I would like to extend a big thank you. With having kids, this is an excellent resource. It's greatly appreciated."

When asked what she wishes others understood about hunger in her community, her answer is simple but powerful.

"Food is food. I wish they weren't so judgmental about it."

Her story reflects the strength, determination and gratitude shared by so many families across the region. Thank you to community members and donors for supporting families like Pansy's.



DID YOU KNOW? The Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank partners with 600+ hunger-relief programs across eight counties to serve the region.

With a name like Smucker, doing good is part of the recipe

For more than 25 years, The J.M. Smucker Co. has stood alongside the Foodbank as a trusted partner in the fight against hunger. In addition to providing food for people and pets through its iconic brands, Smucker shares in the Foodbank's passion to support the community.

For decades, Smucker has donated beloved pantry staples like peanut butter, jam and coffee to help nourish our neighbors. They have also donated millions of dollars and thousands of volunteer service hours to support our mission.

Last fall, Smucker spread the love in a BIG way. In support of its longtime commitment to combat food insecurity, the company donated one of its properties in Orrville to the Foodbank, marking the largest gift in the Foodbank's history.



Smucker's generous donation includes a 19,000-square-foot building, pollinator garden and 30+ acres of land.

Foodbank has met with key county stakeholders, hosted a town hall for Wayne County hunger-relief partners, and distributed a survey to residents to help shape the vision for the facility. We also plan to host a community open house.

As our community continues to experience an increased demand for food, the need to think creatively and expand services for neighbors is more important than ever. The Foodbank is excited to partner with the community to determine an impactful model to continue to uplift and serve our neighbors well into the future.



Foodbank staff had the opportunity to visit the Smucker store and check out the new space.

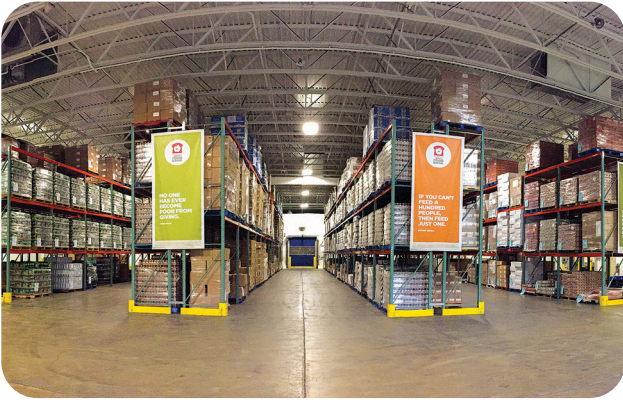
Additionally, they have partnered with the Wayne County Community Foundation to establish a fund and committed \$1 million to support our new and expanded services.

"The J.M. Smucker Co. is an amazing company with a tremendous family of brands that has been supportive of our Foodbank and food banks across the country for decades," said Dan, Foodbank president and CEO. "This transformational donation is further evidence of their deep commitment to food security, and we look forward to digging into this exciting project with local partners."

The Foodbank plans to utilize the facility and property to deepen its impact within Wayne County where more than 15,000 people may experience food insecurity. The



Wayne County hunger-relief partners convened in the fall to share insights and inform the future use of the space.



Collaborating to combat hunger: the food bank/pantry partnership that nourishes the region

How does 40 million pounds of food make its way from donors to neighbors experiencing hunger? Feeding a community is never a solo effort.

At the heart of this work is the partnership between our food bank and an extensive network of pantries, meal sites and other food programs. This collaboration ensures that food moves efficiently from donors to shelves and, ultimately, to local families.

Although food banks and food programs collaborate closely, they differ significantly in how they operate, primarily due to scale and volume.

Food banks serve as central hubs, receiving, sorting, storing and distributing large quantities of donated or purchased food. We handle bulk shipments and coordinate logistics across our region. Food programs, on the other hand, serve on the front lines by distributing food directly to neighbors experiencing hunger.

Food donations often arrive at the food bank by the truckload. Our two campuses provide nearly 96,000 square feet of dry, cooler and freezer space — ample room to safely store food until it reaches the community. This setup benefits not only local families but also food donors, as partnering with a central hub capable of handling large volumes streamlines their charitable efforts.

Both food banks and food pantries are essential components of the hunger-relief system. By coordinating resources, sharing expertise and supporting one another, we're able to reach more people and make a greater impact on the lives of our neighbors.



Six simple ways to make a super impact!

Host a food & funds drive for the Foodbank

The Harvest for Hunger Campaign kicks off in March! The campaign is the Foodbank's largest fundraising campaign and helps support food distribution all year long. One way to support the campaign is to coordinate a food and funds drive with your business, friends, family and faith-based organization.

When promoting your food and funds drive, highlight the Foodbank's Super Six most-needed items to make a difference for our neighbors, including cereal, soup/stew, tuna, canned vegetables, mac & cheese and peanut butter.

Tips for Success!

- **Register your drive and request promotional materials.**
- **Set a goal and rally your team.**
- **Get creative by brainstorming engaging activities.**
- **Create an online fundraising page to share with your network to collect funds. \$1 = 3 meals!**
- **Deliver your collected items and celebrate your efforts!**

To learn more, visit akroncantonfoodbank.org/start-fundraiser.

A community cornerstone: 30 years of the Trinity Breakfast Program

Every weekday morning at Trinity United Church of Christ in Wooster, the aroma of fresh coffee and warm breakfast fills the air as volunteers begin serving hot meals. For three decades, the Trinity Breakfast Program has opened its doors to anyone in need of a meal or a kind word.

In the fall, the program celebrated 30 years of service to the community. Co-founders Sally and Joan assumed leadership of the program when they retired from teaching, continuing the work of a third cofounder, Joanne, who has since passed away.

"Hunger touches all of us," Sally says. "You never know what someone's been through. We show our love through food."

What began with just a handful of guests and donated fast-food trays has grown into a daily breakfast serving 50 to 70 people each morning — more than 300 every week.

Sally and Joan's motivations come from the people they serve and the people they serve alongside. "I work with an amazing group of women who have become my friends," Sally says. "And the gratitude of the people who come through the line keeps us going, too. When someone says, 'Thank you,' that's all it takes."



Susan and Sue enjoy volunteering with the program.

The Trinity Breakfast Program has been a hunger-relief partner of the Foodbank for many years, a partnership that Sally says is vital to their success.

"The Foodbank helps us keep going," she explains. "It takes the stress off our budget and lets us keep serving people



Joan and Sally are co-founders of the breakfast program.

without worrying about what we'll do next. Everyone there is so nice. They even make it fun to come pick up food!"

And as Sally knows well, that kind of support matters most in hard moments, like during the pandemic and a major kitchen remodel, when volunteers packed and served bagged breakfasts. "We never stopped," Sally says proudly. "We just adjusted."

Today, the program runs smoothly thanks to the dedication of volunteers who cook, serve and pick up donations. Now, with a brand-new kitchen and three decades of service behind them, the Trinity Breakfast Program remains a cornerstone of community care in Wooster.



Jennifer and her daughter enjoy the meals they receive from the Trinity Breakfast Program.

Community support powered our response during government shutdown

The Foodbank and our hunger-relief network experienced a significant surge in demand in quarter four last year due to the government shutdown and the delayed distribution of food benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

We extended our pantry hours, added new distribution days, sent our mobile pop-up pantry into additional neighborhoods, and deployed volunteers and staff to support hunger-relief partner sites.

The Foodbank worked hard to keep pace with the heightened need despite fewer resources, as government food support declined by more than 30%.

The Foodbank's swift, strong response was made possible by you. Individuals, foundations, corporations, the state of Ohio and city governments all rose to the moment to support local hunger relief when it mattered most. We are deeply grateful!



Take the plunge: 22nd Annual Polar Bear Jump



Come make a splash at the Portage Lakes Polar Bear Jump on Feb. 28. Take the icy plunge to raise money for the Foodbank!

Learn more and register at
PortageLakesPolarBearClub.com

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Harvest for Hunger Campaign kicks off in March

Support the Foodbank's 35th annual Harvest for Hunger Campaign! This year's goal is to raise enough food and funds for 4.8 million meals, and we need your help! This campaign is vital as it supports food distribution all year long.

Volunteer, make a personal donation, corporate gift or coordinate payroll deduction for your employees. Learn more ways to make an impact at akroncantonfoodbank.org/harvest.

✓ Check Out Hunger

Donate \$10, \$5 or \$1 each time you visit a participating supermarket.

✓ Coordinate a virtual or traditional food & funds drive

Create an online fundraising page to share with your network and/or collect food and funds. \$1 = 3 meals!

Thank you to our Check Out Hunger partners!



Mark Your Calendar

Harvest for Hunger Campaign Kickoff Luncheon

February 27, 2026

Portage Lakes Polar Bear Jump

February 28, 2026

Harvest for Hunger: Check Out Hunger

March 1-May 31, 2026