

NOURISHING NEWS

FROM THE GREATER BERKS FOOD BANK

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World Food Day Breakfast

Every October, the Greater Berks Food Bank (GBFB) looks forward to the opportunity to gather with its supporters at its annual World Food Day Breakfast. The 33rd annual Breakfast was held on October 20 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel and was attended by more than 200 of our donors, volunteers, agency members and other partners in the fight against local hunger.

The Breakfast offers us the chance to both inform our supporters of our latest happenings as well as our plans for the future. The highlight of this year's event was our Mobile Market program. Since it was piloted in April, the Mobile Market has expanded to four monthly distribution sites –Reading (two sites), Wernersville, and Auburn, Schuylkill County. To date, the GBFB has directly distributed more



than 85,000 pounds of healthy foods, including produce, dairy and frozen meats through this program. This food has nourished more than 3,000 families (8,500 total individuals).

Two partners critical to the Mobile Markets' success were also honored at the Breakfast. Giant Food Stores, and their Our Family Foundation, awarded the GBFB a \$150,000 competitive grant (payable over three years) earlier this year. This generous funding allowed the GBFB to acquire the truck that services the Mobile Market program (photo) and will provide support of program costs. We also presented our 21st Annual Jim and Anna Connors Volunteerism Award to the loyal group of volunteers that have each assisted at all, or nearly all, of the Mobile Market distributions. These volunteers include: Maribel Artola, Kathy Donahue, Gery Essick, Gregory Gattone Jr., Carol Johnston, Cindy and Dave Kercher, Vickie Kintzer, Anne Levan, Nancy and John Prann, Teri Wagner, and Sandy Witman (photo). Their time and dedication was essential to getting this impactful program off the ground and we truly appreciate them all!



The Greater Berks Food Bank would like to especially thank the Breakfast's Gold Sponsor

M&T Bank



Sec. Redding, 3rd from left, with GBFB Exec. Dir. Peg Bianca, to his right, and GBFB Board members.

PA Secretary of Agriculture meets with GBFB & Taproot Farm

GBFB staff and Board members had the honor to visit with Russell Redding, the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, on October 17. Secretary Redding met us at Taproot Farm, Shoemakersville, one of six local farms that provided fresh produce to the GBFB through the Pennsylvania Agriculture Surplus System (PASS) this year. Through PASS, the state provides \$1 million annually to state food banks to purchase fresh and healthy foods from Pennsylvania farmers and agricultural processors (dairy, meats, eggs). The PASS program not only helps farmers recoup expenses for surplus crops, it allows food banks to inexpensively provide large quantities of fresh and healthy foods to the clients they serve. The GBFB received \$40,000 in the first year of PASS (July 2015 - June 2016) and with that we were able to purchase 124,000 pounds of fresh and healthy foods for our hungry neighbors in Berks and Schuylkill Counties. Some of the crops the GBFB

acquired and redistributed include: spinach, broccoli, tomatoes, potatoes, kale, green peppers, yellow squash and eggplants - to name just a few! We'd like to thank representatives from the offices of State Representatives Ryan Mackenzie and Barry Jozwiak, and Senator Judy Schwank, for joining the tour. Also a huge thanks to the other five local farms and orchards that partnered with the GBFB for PASS: Broad Wing Farm, Frecon Farms, IHartHarvest, Inc. - The Potato Project, Red Earth Farm, and Weaver's Orchard!

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If you have any comments or questions, please contact the editor.

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A copy of the official registration and financial information of the Greater Berks Food Bank may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free within Pennsylvania 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

From the Executive Director



The Holidays have arrived with all of the excitement and merriment the season of giving and sharing brings. As we challenge ourselves to find the perfect gifts for our friends and families we also want to provide for those who don't have what we do. This gift could be something as simple as a toothbrush. Just recently we received a Feeding America donation from the company Oral-B. A tractor trailer arrived at our dock filled with cases that contained 220,536 Oral-B toothbrushes! Our excitement

ran high, as a toothbrush was the number one request from the 1,500 children participating in our Weekender Backpack Program. When the next time came to pack the food packages for these children we added a box of 6 toothbrushes to each bag. Yes it will brighten their Holidays and their smiles. We were very fortunate to acquire this fabulous donation.

It cost us \$2,200 dollars for these toothbrushes to be transported from Iowa. This is less than a penny per toothbrush. The retail value of the toothbrushes was nearly \$500,000. This example illustrates what we mean when we state that every \$1 donated provides \$20 worth of grocery products to those in need.

It is rather sobering to be discussing toothbrushes as the perfect gift but we know firsthand that they are. We don't realize how something so simple can mean so much to someone else.

As the Holidays arrive and the New Year advances I would like to thank everyone for all the gifts the Greater Berks Food Bank has received to advance its mission "to feed the hungry." And many thanks for all the gifts not yet made this year to help us as we "Bring More to the Table." Best wishes to all for wonderful Holidays and a New Year filled with all of your dreams.

CROP Walk passes \$1 million raised!



The 35th annual Reading Berks CROP Walk, coordinated by the West Berks Mission District and CROP committee members, took place on Sunday, October 9 at Gring's Mill. To mark the 35th anniversary, nearly 400 walkers, from 40 area places of worship, hit the trails to raise funds to fight hunger at home and abroad. Almost \$30,000 was raised this year, with twenty-five percent of the proceeds going to the

GBFB and the remainder going to international hunger relief efforts led by Church World Services. This year's money raised pushed the total raised throughout the Walk's history to over \$1 million!

Bern Reformed U.C.C., Leesport, won the "Funky Flip Flop Award" for having the most youth walkers participating. Walkers posed with their award before hitting the trails!

Thank you to all who walked and continue to make this a successful event after 35 years!

Congressman Dent visits the GBFB

On October 18, we had the privilege of hosting a visit from U.S. Congressman Charlie Dent. GBFB Executive Director, Peg Bianca, toured the Congressman through our distribution center where he had the opportunity to meet with our volunteers who were packing the weekly Weekender bags for elementary schools. Peg also got to discuss the federal Commodity Supplemental Food Program with the Congressman. Each month, the GBFB is able to distribute a box of food to nearly 1,500 low-income seniors in Berks and Schuylkill counties through this program. Thank you Congressman Dent for taking time out of your extremely busy schedule to learn more about the GBFB and our work in the community!



Program Feature: Senior Food Totes

Hunger is a sad reality for many of our senior neighbors. The elderly represent perhaps the fastest growing demographic served by the GBFB (and food banks across the nation). Ten-percent of those we serve are elderly.

To combat this problem, and to insure in-need seniors in our community get the nourishment so vital to their physical and mental well-being, the GBFB has been providing a monthly box of food to low-income seniors for more than a dozen years. With food provided through the federal Commodity Supplemental Food Program, the GBFB currently distributes food boxes to nearly 1,500 enrolled participants monthly. The boxes, filled with food respectful of seniors' health concerns (low-sodium and low-sugar for those dealing with high blood pressure or diabetes), are delivered by GBFB trucks to 70 senior high-rises and food pantry sites throughout Berks and Schuylkill counties. About another 30 seniors pick up their box monthly at the GBFB.

This spring, the GBFB was excited to initiate its Mobile Direct program to provide these at-risk seniors with healthy fresh produce and dairy items, as well as frozen meats, to supplement their monthly boxes. As perishable donations allow, GBFB trucks deliver a shipment of these wonderful foods to our Senior Food Tote partner sites. Since April, 164,500 pounds of perishable foods have been distributed.

Sheila Rampolla, Resident Services Coordinator at the Hugh Carsella Apartments (N. 10th Street, Reading) tells us of this program's impact - "When we post a sign stating that the GBFB will be delivering fresh foods, such as vegetables and fruits, the message spreads through our building within minutes. Our residents are so happy and so appreciative of this fresh food. These foods provide them with good nutritious options that they can't afford otherwise."



Senior Food Tote participant, Susan Cook, picks up her monthly box at the GBFB and is helped by GBFB volunteer, Elon Gruber

We thank the following businesses, organizations and places of worship that recently hosted food and fund drives*:

- 🍌 1847 Financial
- 🍌 Adelphia Seafood
- 🍌 Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, LLP
- 🍌 Barrer & White Orthodontists
- 🍌 Berks Co. Intermediate Unit
- 🍌 Berks County Bicycle Club
- 🍌 Berks Quilters Guild
- 🍌 Berkshire Heights Early Learning Center
- 🍌 Boscov's Department Stores
- 🍌 Christ Church U.C.C.
- 🍌 Country Meadows of Wyomissing
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- 🍌 Madison Cannon
- 🍌 Millmont Elementary School
- 🍌 Neighborhood Housing Services
- 🍌 New Apostolic Church
- 🍌 Newcomers Club of Greater Reading
- 🍌 Northwest Elementary School
- 🍌 Notre Dame Club of Berks Co.
- 🍌 Reading China & Glass
- 🍌 Reading Royals Hockey
- 🍌 Reading/Muhlenberg Career & Tech. Ctr.
- 🍌 Redner's Warehouse Markets
- 🍌 Reform Congregation Oheb Shalom
- 🍌 Rotary Club - Spring Twp Centennial
- 🍌 Santander Arena & Performing Arts Ctr.
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- 🍌 St. Marks U.C.C.
- 🍌 Standard Group
- 🍌 Stericycle
- 🍌 Sun Federal Credit Union
- 🍌 Travelers Insurance Company
- 🍌 Tutor Time
- 🍌 Weis Markets
- 🍌 WRFY-FM/Y102

* Food drives of at least 100 lbs. and fund drives of at least \$100 from 7/1/16 to 11/25/16

Scouting for Food celebrates 30 years



On a chilly November Saturday, Boy Scouts collected food from neighborhoods across Berks County for the GBFB as part of the 30th annual Scouting for Food drive. The food drive, held by the Hawk Mountain Council of the Boy Scouts of America, collected 56,000 pounds of food to feed our hungry neighbors!

Cranksgiving

Gearing up early for the Thanksgiving holiday, the Berks County Bicycle Club held their 3rd annual Cranksgiving food drive on October 29. Club members took off from Trooper Thorn's Pub and biked to different grocery stores throughout the area with a list of foods to purchase for Thanksgiving meals for our hungry neighbors - including turkeys! In total, more than 2,300 pounds of food were collected, including more than 1,000 pounds of turkeys!



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About Our Organization . . .
The Greater Berks Food Bank, established in 1983, collects, purchases, stores, and distributes over seven million pounds of food annually to the more than 300 programs which feed the hungry in Berks & Schuylkill counties.



Ways you can help fight hunger in the New Year.

Make a Financial Donation

- ✂ Mail a gift by check or donate online at www.berksfoodbank.org
- ✂ Make a birthday gift in honor of someone special
- ✂ Become a monthly donor
- ✂ Help us successfully conclude our Bringing More to the Table Capital Campaign
- ✂ Ask your employer if they match charitable gifts
- ✂ Include the GBFB in your estate plans
- ✂ Plan an event that will benefit the GBFB
- ✂ Remember - we can acquire \$20 worth of food for every \$1 donated and 96.5% of all donations go directly to food & services

Donate Food

- ✂ Plan a food drive at your office
- ✂ Plant an extra row in your garden and drop off the harvest at the GBFB

Volunteer

- ✂ Help repack food in our warehouse or distribute fresh and healthy items through our Mobile Market and Produce 4 Kids programs
- ✂ Go to www.berksfoodbank.org to register or call 610-926-5802 ext. 206 for more info

Keep Up-To-Date and Spread the Word!

- ✂ Check our website and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/GreaterBerksFoodBank) routinely for upcoming events and ways to get involved
- ✂ If you have not already, "like" us on Facebook and encourage your friends to as well

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