

NOURISHING NEWS

FROM HELPING HARVEST

Fall 2022

Weekender Program Expands

Nourishing at-risk young children has been a priority of our Weekender Program since we opened our first program site in 2004. The program sends children, identified as coming from low-income families, home with a bag of nourishing non-perishable foods after-school on Fridays. The food is intended to keep the children fed over the weekend, a time where they go without the breakfasts and lunches provided by their schools. Keeping properly nourished over the weekend allows the children to return to school on Monday feeling healthy, energized and ready to learn.

The 2020-21 school year severely limited our ability to serve these children as most were learning remotely. Many of the 18 school sites we served (which represented about 1,200 children weekly) pre-pandemic went on hiatus.

However, as the children returned to school for the 2021-22 school year, our Programs Department worked diligently to make the program stronger than ever. These determined efforts have continued into the current school year. Today, Helping Harvest distributes Weekender bags at 70 school sites (primarily elementary schools) in Berks and Schuylkill counties.



Volunteers pack the weekly bags

As one of the focus areas of our recently completed strategic plan, we have sought to expand the program to serve the youngest of children, before they enter the public school system, during what is considered the peak brain development years (in utero to age eight). To accomplish this, our Programs Department has secured partnerships with area day cares, Head Starts, and intermediate units to send these bags of food home with younger children.

In total, the Weekender Program is now nourishing nearly 5,000 children weekly.

The impact this program is having on the children, their families and their schools is immeasurable. It is our mission to sustain and expand the Weekender in the school years to come. However, the program comes at quite the cost to Helping Harvest. We estimate each bag distributed (filled with foods we purchased) costs us about \$11. Weekly delivery costs only furthers that expense.

To insure the continued success of Weekender, we hope you will consider making a thoughtful gift to feed the youngest of our struggling neighbors.

Donate to support the Weekender Program (scan QR Code).



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

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From the President

Dear Friend of Helping Harvest,

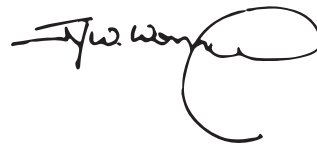
As we approach this season of giving thanks, I very much hope that you and yours have had a wonderful Thanksgiving, and are gearing up for a wonderful Holiday season. Here at Helping Harvest, we are in the middle of our busiest and most important time of the year.

During the months of November and December, our volunteers and supporters are helping the families we serve get ready for the most challenging season in which to be food insecure. Imagine being a young mother or father not being certain there will be a Thanksgiving or Holiday meal on the table. Imagine having to choose between paying your heating bill in the winter, purchasing your medication, or providing food for you and your loved ones. Imagine watching the world celebrate the season of giving, but you have nothing you can give your family.

This is what makes the work we do at Helping Harvest so very special at this time of year. Together we can make sure that families experience the joy of this season free from fear, want, or hunger. Together we can help seniors feel warm and secure in their homes. Together we can ensure that children experience the wonder and splendor of the holidays with a little more bliss and a little more comfort.

It is a rare gift to have the ability and the opportunity to be able to care for our neighbors in this way, especially this year, when inflation and insecurity will make this season even more challenging than those in previous years. To those of you who have helped, are helping, and will help us support low-income individuals and families in Berks and Schuylkill Counties: **THANK YOU and HAPPY HOLIDAYS!**

Your Friend,



Jay Worrall, President



Happy Holidays



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

Helping Harvest to Distribute 10 Million Pounds in 2022

The need for food assistance across Berks and Schuylkill counties (and across the nation) has grown significantly in 2022 as families, who were already struggling, are now dealing with inflation's effects. By the end of this year, Helping Harvest expects we will have delivered more than 10 million pounds of food to the more than 320 charitable food programs we supply in our two counties.

This represents a steep increase from the 8.25 million pounds distributed in 2021, at which time we were starting to see a leveling from the heights of 2020's COVID impacted distributions (nearly 11 million pounds in 2020).



To keep up with this demand, we continue to make food purchases by the (multiple) truckloads. We anticipate we will purchase more than \$3 million of food by the time this year concludes. We are grateful for you, our loyal supporters, who have contributed throughout the year to allow us to keep up with this ongoing demand. Your future support will allow us to sustain these efforts to insure no one in our community needs to go to bed hungry.

We are also grateful for the new distribution partners who have joined our network this year to help us accomplish our mission of feeding the hungry.

Abundant Life Church, Birdsboro; Pine Grove Military Share Distribution, Schuylkill County; LGBT Center of Greater Reading; Community Evangelical Church, Sinking Spring; Help Net Ministries, Inc., Ashland; and Calvary Bible Fellowship, Sinking Spring, are just some of the agencies that have joined the fight to end hunger. Your support has also allowed us to open three new Mobile Market sites this year in Schuylkill County: Valley View, South Schuylkill and Ringtown.

Thank YOU for being a part of our response to the continued need in OUR community.

Cranksgiving Rolls Out the Support!

Costumed riders took to the road for the 9th Annual Cranksgiving food drive on October 29. This year's participants brought in 3,500 pounds of food, which included two huge containers filled with turkeys! Event sponsors contributed \$5,500 to donate to Helping Harvest, which is most welcome during our busiest time of year. Since its inception, Cranksgiving Berks County has contributed nearly 29,000 pounds - almost 15 tons of food - to Helping Harvest.

Our warmest thanks to the organizers, sponsors and participants of Cranksgiving. We appreciate not only your support, but also your enthusiasm in giving back to the community. Thank you for helping to make the holidays brighter for your neighbors in need!



Thank you Boy Scouts!

The 36th annual Scouting for Food was once again a huge success! On Saturday, November 5, the Hawk Mountain Council, Boy Scouts of America, distributed door hangers to area homes requesting food donations. The following Saturday, they returned and gathered 43,000 pounds of food for Helping Harvest. Thank you to the hundreds of Scouts, their families and the Scout leaders who dedicated two Saturdays to this drive. The need for food assistance in our community is greater than ever. The food collected by the Scouts will help fill the plates of our neighbors in need throughout this holiday season.



A GIANT Help in Fighting Hunger

We would like to recognize our friends at The GIANT Company for their amazing contributions in the fight against hunger. To help us prepare for the Thanksgiving holiday, GIANT donated 500 turkeys and 500 chickens to Helping Harvest to be distributed to families in need throughout Berks and Schuylkill counties. GIANT employees who were present for the donation then stayed to volunteer in our warehouse, helping to pack emergency boxes for our neighbors in need.

GIANT's donation to Helping Harvest is part of a wider philanthropic effort. The company donated a total of 13,000 turkeys and chickens to community partners and food banks across Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia in advance of Thanksgiving.

GIANT's support in the fight against hunger is evident not just during the holidays, but throughout the year. In addition to their food and monetary donations, GIANT's customers are invited to round up their purchase at checkout to benefit their local food bank. September's successful campaign for Hunger Action Month generated \$30,000 to benefit Helping Harvest, which helped to offset some of our increased food costs. As is their custom, GIANT employees spent several hours bagging potatoes after presenting their sizable contribution.

We deeply appreciate the continued support of GIANT and their efforts in fighting hunger in the communities that they serve.



CROP Walk

On a beautiful Sunday afternoon in October, members from more than 30 area churches participated in this year's Reading-Berks CROP Walk, generating nearly \$25,000 in donations. As always, 25% of the proceeds will benefit our local efforts and the remainder will help Church World Service's international humanitarian work. Through the years, more than \$1,000,000 has been raised to support our combined causes. Thank you to West Berks Mission District and the CROP Walk committee; your dedication is so much appreciated!



Sample & Sip

On September 22, we held our first Sample & Sip event to benefit our growing Weekender Program. More than 250 guests savored creations generously provided by Chef Tim Twiford of Redner's Markets and Chef Carlos Gomez of the DoubleTree Hotel. Delicious treats were provided by our friends at Sweet Street Desserts. Those in attendance also enjoyed short presentations from local sommelier, Michael Bukovsky, who donated his time (and some wine) in support of Helping Harvest.

We appreciate the strong outpouring of support for our Weekender Program, which is now serving nearly 5,000 local children at over 70 schools and learning centers each week. This is more than a 100% increase in enrollment over last year, an expansion that would not be possible without the support of our donors. We are truly grateful to be part of this generous community.

2023 will mark the 40th Anniversary of Helping Harvest, and we cannot wait to celebrate this milestone with you. We hope you will join us for the occasion - stay tuned for details of our coming event!



**Thank You to
Sample & Sips' Lead Sponsor**

M&T Bank

Holiday Meals

Our busy holiday season is upon us, and Helping Harvest volunteers have been hard at work for several weeks, donating their valuable free time to help us prepare. We have seen a dramatic increase in need for food assistance over the past several months, and adjusted our preparations accordingly. This year, we ordered enough food to pack 6,000 Thanksgiving boxes to distribute with turkeys and 6,000 holiday boxes to distribute in December with hams. In total, we will serve holiday meals to one thousand more families in Berks and Schuylkill counties than last year.

It is because of your support that we are able to put food on the tables of our neighbors in need during the holidays and throughout the year. Your gifts, food drives and volunteer efforts have a direct impact right here in your community. While you may not meet the people who are touched by your generosity, you have made a difference in their lives.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! CAN YOU HELP?



We are always in need of volunteers, especially to help pack Weekender bags

To fulfill the increased demand for this program, an additional volunteer shift has been added:
Mondays from 4:30-6:30pm.

This is a great opportunity for students to get their service hours.
Groups welcome!
Not a volunteer yet? Register at HelpingHarvest.org/volunteer

Helping Harvest

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Reading, PA 19608

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HelpingHarvest.org

About Our Organization . . .

Helping Harvest established in 1983, collects, purchases, stores, and distributes over ten million pounds of food annually to the more than 320 programs which feed the hungry in Berks & Schuylkill counties.

