

A publication of the Food Bank of South Jersey

A Taste of Compassion

CIRCLE OF EXCELLENCE: Salem County Pantry Receives FBSJ's Highest Honor

The Circle of Excellence Award is given annually to a partner agency whose impact through its programs and services stand apart in the fight against hunger in South Jersey. This year's award goes to Victory Assembly of God located in Salem County.

Since opening its doors, The Pantry at Victory Assembly of God has provided nutritional support for more than 1,450 households, distributing thousands of bags of groceries, totaling more than 750,000 pounds of food in all!

In 2018, Victory Assembly of God partnered with FBSJ for the 'Just Say YES!' nutrition program, part of FBSJ's Health & Wellness outreach to bring nutrition awareness and healthy eating habits to South Jersey's food insecure. The Pantry deepened its ties to FBSJ's Retail Rescue Program, and continued partnerships, such as the Hunters for the Hungry Program, all of which allow Victory to distribute thousands of pounds of surplus meat. Under Rev. Maria Siegel's leadership and vision, Victory Assembly of God also partnered with Free'Dom Books to distribute over 1,800 books in 2018.

"For our Pantry, 2018 has been a "Year of YES", shares Siegel. Yes, to creative initiatives to serve our clients with greater sensitivity and deeper compassion. Yes, to expanding our capacity for more food, better food, fresher food. Yes, to partnering with community organizations that foster literacy and enlighten minds. Yes, to hospitality, to facilitating connectivity, because sometimes a hungry heart is as urgent a need as a hungry belly. The elderly, the single parent, the working family struggling to make ends meet, or anyone in food crisis is welcome to come."



PICTURED: FBSJ Chair Joe Ford, at left, Rev. Maria Siegel of Victoria Assembly of God, and FBSJ CEO Fred Wasiak celebrate the Salem County pantry's Circle of Excellence Recognition.

UPCOMING EVENTS



November 21, 2019
6:30pm • Riverton Country Club

TICKETS NOW ON SALE!
Visit foodbanksj.org/VivaSJ for more information.



Drop off a frozen turkey at the FBSJ headquarters in Pennsauken on **Saturday, November 16th** between 11AM and 4PM and help a family in need host a traditional Thanksgiving meal. Add the essential fixings for a superb feast, such as cranberry sauce, stuffing, or mashed potato mix, to your donation to create a charitable meal that any family will feel truly "thankful" to enjoy.



OUR MISSION:
The Food Bank of South Jersey exists to provide an immediate solution to the urgent problem of hunger by providing food to needy people, teaching them to eat nutritiously, and helping them to find sustainable ways to improve their lives.



©Copyright NOV. 2019



**"It helps
me survive."**
READ MORE ON PG. 2



EMERGENCY FOOD FUND: PG. 3
Effects of The Longest Government Shutdown



SUMMER MEALS RECAP: PG. 3
Over 6,000 Children Fed



CIRCLE OF EXCELLENCE: PG. 4
Making a Difference in Salem County

THE REALITY OF SENIOR HUNGER

Everyone should know a person like Rosario. She's witty, artistic, creative, compassionate and resourceful, driven to help those around her with little regard for her own wellbeing. She is selfless, giving and kind to all who meet her. She tells vibrant stories – most of which are true, and all of which are entertaining.

She is, in every respect, a lovely woman. She is also struggling to make ends meet.

At 78, Rosario Blanco is a retired fashion designer, who once earned nearly six figures a year at the height of her professional life working in New York City's fashion district, which she commuted to each day by train from her home in Cherry Hill. Now a widow, with no children, Rosario lives a modest life in an assisted living apartment community, where she benefits from home health aides to maintain her independent lifestyle – her entire savings gone from decades of supporting family, friends and anyone she could lend a dollar to help.

"It was always important to me to be good to other people," Rosario shares. "What is more important in this life, than being good to others? Nothing. Nothing matters more."

To keep her refrigerator from going empty, Rosario, of Spanish and Cuban descent with more than 50 years as a United States citizen, relies heavily – and with great appreciation – on food she receives from the food pantry closest to her Camden County apartment.

"It helps me," she says of her monthly food pantry visits. "It helps me survive."



PICTURED: Rosario Blanco, who earned nearly six figures as a clothing designer at the prime of her career. Today, the 78-year-old budgets conservatively and is grateful for her monthly food pantry visits.

Rosario is not alone.

Currently, nearly 5 million senior citizens face hunger in our country. After a lifetime of hard work, 63 percent of the households with older adults (50+) that Feeding America serves find themselves facing an impossible choice — to buy groceries or medical care. The most recent report, released in 2019 using 2017 data, found that 5.5 million seniors, or 7.7 percent of the senior population, were food insecure in 2017. Though the rate of food insecurity among seniors is lower in recent years, it remains significantly higher than it was in 2007. The current number of seniors who are food insecure is more than double what it was in 2001.

The reality is, the rate of hunger among seniors age 60 and older has increased by 45 percent since 2001, a lingering effect of the 2008 recession. At the current rate, the number of food-insecure seniors may grow to more than 8 million by 2050 – and the reality does not stop there.

The Food Bank of South Jersey is committed to helping seniors, like Rosario, have access to nutritious food, with services ranging from Senior Boxes to food pantry distribution locations and Hope Mobiles. With continued diligence, food insecurity among South Jersey's senior population can diminish –nurturing a better reality for all.



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Hello Friends and Supporters of FBSJ,

Here we are – harvest time! As I drive throughout South Jersey visiting with our many food pantries, the season of pumpkins on porches, corn mazes in fields and crisp yellow, red and auburn leaves fills my senses. This is a time for reflection and renewal, a time to anticipate the joys of the holiday season and reminisce on all the days that have brought us to this point this calendar year – so many wonderful days.

For me, this has truly been a wonderful and wondrous year.

Since joining the Food Bank of South Jersey as President and CEO last year around this time, I have met so many truly amazing and inspiring people.

I have experienced the awe of arriving at the Beacon of Hope Pantry in Mount Holly on a cold and blustery morning to find nearly 20 people had been patiently waiting there since 6 a.m. for food. I have experienced the mindfulness of collaborating with diligent and dedicated FBSJ team members and volunteers to bring meals to our region's school children. I have felt the appreciation from seniors as they collected their monthly food boxes, packed with a two-week supply of nutritional food items. I have witnessed the uplifting, enlivening team work of the FBSJ staff.

This year, I have experienced the Food Bank of South Jersey – and I am forever changed.

With 2020 in view, I am delighted to share with you that FBSJ is bringing a dynamic, strategic and long-term vision to FBSJ's tireless work to feed food-insecure members of our community in Camden, Burlington, Gloucester and Salem counties. There will be big announcements. There will be expanded program reach. There will be new avenues and pathways to deliver hope to our South Jersey neighbors in need.

I look forward to another year of being deeply inspired by all that I see at FBSJ. Knowing we can be more and better together, I wish you all of the joys of the coming season, and share with you my hope that 2020 will be a milestone year in many ways for FBSJ – and all we serve.

Looking forward to experiencing more wonders,

Fred C. Wasiak

Fred C. Wasiak
President & CEO



LONGEST GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN SPARKS A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION

An extreme surge in direct food requests during the temporary federal government shutdown that impacted South Jersey one year ago, prompted FBSJ to launch an Emergency Food Fund. In addition to helping FBSJ respond to unforeseen disasters, including incidents such as the government shutdown, as well as natural disasters, the fund empowers FBSJ to purchase additional food supplies and increase its distribution to impacted communities, as well as strengthen existing FBSJ hunger relief programs.

The Emergency Food Fund campaign is an annual board-led fundraiser with the ambitious goal of raising \$240,000 in 2019 to enhance existing FBSJ hunger relief programs, and to strengthen emergency response capacity. Currently in its inaugural year, the Emergency Food Fund campaign has already reached a remarkable \$141,723 in outright gifts and pledge commitments.

GOAL:
\$240,000

60% GOAL REACHED

\$98,277 needed by Dec. 31 to meet our goal



This critical campaign is growing, but it also needs continuous support to help increase capacity to respond effectively during unforeseen disasters that result in temporary or long-term food insecurity. With 2020 in view and many of our families being one disaster away from becoming food-insecure, donations to the Emergency Food Fund Campaign are greatly needed.

When disaster strikes, the ability to secure nutritious food on a regular basis is just as critical as obtaining adequate shelter. In minutes, whether the relentless rush of rising, turbulent waters, the roar of tornado-force winds, or the blight of scorching temperatures impacting healthy crops – food security is endangered. Unemployment, for many families, due to sudden job loss, workplace furloughs or disabling health circumstances, also cripples food security – leaving devastating hunger as sufficient access to affordable, nutritious food is compromised.

The everyday disaster of hunger can strike at any time. The Food Bank of South Jersey (FBSJ) is ready – prepared, committed and positioned to reach every corner of Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Salem counties to provide food assistance. Hunger lives here...but, so does hope.

YOU CAN HELP US REACH OUR GOAL: To learn more or to donate to the Food Bank of South Jersey's Emergency Food Fund, visit donate.foodbanksj.org/foodfund or call FBSJ's development office at 856.662.4884.



PICTURED: A gentleman receiving food at one of our many Hope Mobile Sites that is powered by the Emergency Food Fund.

2019 Summer Meals Recap

238,986 MEALS SERVED



6,088
CHILDREN FED

131
SITES

10,834 MOBILE MEALS SERVED



1,301
CHILDREN FED

23
SITES

Since its inception in 2010, the Food Bank of South Jersey's Summer Meals program has provided nearly one million meals to thousands of children and has received statewide recognition, including a Champion of Feeding Certificate from the State of New Jersey Department of Agriculture. If you are interested in becoming a Summer Meals program sponsor for Summer 2020, contact us at partner@foodbanksj.org or call our development office at 856.662.4884.

Thank you to all of the 2019 Summer Meals Sponsors!

