



Serving with Passion and Kindness

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BUILDING CONNECTION BEYOND FOOD

In the delivery logistics world, it's called the last mile. It's the final phase of getting a product in the hands of the consumer. That's one way to think of our 200 partner agencies – they are our last mile.

They deliver the much-needed nutritious food we provide them to the hundreds of families that show up at distributions all over South Jersey. They are our last mile to reach children with after-school snacks and weekend meals. They are our last mile in helping seniors in our community deal with impossible choices between food and other expenses.

Recently, we celebrated our partner agencies at our annual Partners Appreciation Luncheon. I had the opportunity to guide them in an engagement exercise that had each table working together on a project.

We talked about how through this project, they needed to communicate with each other to get it completed. How, through community, they had to work toward a common purpose. And finally, they had to practice communion, by sharing, blending, and dedicating themselves to the whole group.

When our pantry agency leaders run a distribution, serving hundreds of families in need, I watch how they

connect with our neighbors, through a hug, a joke, or just by listening. Their connection goes beyond merely handing out food.

We asked our pantry of the year leader, Dave Cornwell from the Friends of Clementon Food Pantry at St. Mary's, what's his secret. Dave said, "There's a lot of passion that goes on here. The secret: it's kindness. That all it takes."

This Thanksgiving, I'm grateful for all the kindness our supporters and partners show our neighbors every day. Together they've joined the common purpose to truly change hunger in South Jersey.



Fred C. Wasiak
President & CEO
Food Bank of South Jersey



GROWING HEALTHY PANTRIES ACROSS NEW JERSEY

More than 800,000 New Jerseyans, including nearly 200,000 children, are food insecure and lack consistent access to nutritious foods and other necessities for living healthy lives.

To promote greater health equity in our state, NJ's five food banks, with the support of Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey and Feeding America, have created Growing Healthy Pantries, a signature collaboration aimed at achieving food security and promoting healthy food choices by establishing the first statewide healthy choice pantry model.

The first phase of this 18-month pilot initiative is almost complete and focused on the development of a toolkit to provide local pantries with the knowledge, resources, and framework to develop nutrition policy, increase healthy food options, and provide essential wrap-around services that address the factors that lead to individuals and families experiencing food insecurity.



We know from research that people living in food-insecure households face barriers to the consistent adoption of healthy eating patterns. New Jersey's food banks are in a unique position to address the link between food insecurity and health. Therefore, Growing Healthy Pantries goes beyond building nutrition awareness by empowering our neighbors to create positive outcomes and healthier tomorrows.

SNAP-ED'S HEALTHY PANTRY INITIATIVE FOCUSES ON NEIGHBORS' HEALTH



2023-2024 HEALTHY PANTRY INITIATIVE



HPI ENCOURAGES AND GUIDES
PARTICIPANTS TO CHOOSE AND CONSUME
HEALTHY FOODS – ONE BITE AT A TIME!

Our Health and Wellness department is currently seeking new partners for our Healthy Pantry Initiative (HPI). HPI helps food pantries to increase the availability, promotion, and distribution of nutritious foods and nudge neighbors toward making healthier choices.

Food Bank staff works in partnership with pantries to encourage the availability of healthier options and to make the healthier choices the easier choices for neighbors visiting the pantries. By providing healthy food choice options, tents, shelving units, and more, HPI helps to create a healthy food environment in the pantry environment. Plus, each pantry site gets six live presentations, including cooking demonstrations and nutrition education.

"FBSJ has been working with SNAP-Ed's HPI grant since 2019, and we have improved more than 150 pantries," says Marquita Speed, Senior Manager of Health and Wellness. "Every year, the HPI team aims to improve the program by adding new delicious recipes using common pantry items, improving incentives and visual aids, and responding to survey feedback."

INCREASING H.O.P.E. THROUGH OUR PARTNERS

This past summer, the Healthy Outcomes and Pantry Empowerment (H.O.P.E.) Coalition was launched by our team to demonstrate to our partner agencies how simple it can be to incorporate food choices into all pantry models.

"BEING ABLE TO COME HERE AND BE ENCOURAGED, ALMOST EMPOWERED I WOULD SAY, TO TAKE UP THE CHALLENGE OF HOW DO WE SERVE OUR NEIGHBORS BETTER."



H.O.P.E. offers simple nutrition education, provides recipe samples that incorporate commonly distributed pantry food, and shares useful resources with our community of pantry partners.

"We love these meetings, and it really helps us a lot to brainstorm, to get over any type of challenges, and to see what help there is out there," said Jenny from The WOW Center in Merchantville. "We didn't even know most of this exists, with extra volunteers, vehicles, or grants. Attending is very, very beneficial for our Center and for our pantry."

At the October gathering, the team held a simulation of a drive-thru pantry model with various choice options and a full-choice pantry model.

"Being able to come here and be encouraged, almost empowered I would say, to take up the challenge of how do we serve our neighbors better," echoed India, also from The WOW Center. "We left the first time on fire. Like, we got this."



STUDENTS CHANGE HUNGER COMPETITION IS HEATING UP!

Another season of change is underway! Each year, the NJ Federation of Food Banks challenges local schools and youth organizations to help feed our food-insecure neighbors with Students Change Hunger.

Students Change Hunger is a friendly contest where student groups host food drives and fundraisers to help feed our New Jersey neighbors. Youth organizations throughout the state compete to collect as much as possible for their local food bank. The teams that bring in the most food and raises the most funds wins!

This statewide competition ends January 12, 2024. Learn more or sign up your student group at foodbanksj.org/studentschangehunger.



CELEBRATING OUR PARTNERS

In September, we had a lovely time celebrating the critical work of our agency, community, and program partners that contribute so much to our shared mission. Congratulations to our agency of the year, Friends of Clementon Food Pantry at St. Mary's, as well as Ladies in Transit, Woodbury School Pantry, and St. Thomas Episcopal Food Pantry for their work with our senior, children, and mobile programs (respectively).



GIVING TUESDAY

Giving Tuesday is coming up on November 28. With the holidays on the horizon, we hope you'll consider donating to the Food Bank. Your support helps ensure that our 300+ community partners have essential food and other items to distribute to our neighbors this harvest season and beyond.

Join the journey. Change hunger.

Advocate. Donate. Volunteer.

With the Food Bank **FOR** South Jersey. Visit foodbanksj.org.



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

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