

# NOURISHING NEWS

FROM THE GREATER BERKS FOOD BANK

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## GBFB honors its Volunteers

Our volunteers, both those who help at our warehouse and office and at our network of food programs, are the backbone of the GBFB. Without their extensive commitment of time and energy we would never be able to nourish so many in our community. Last year 783 individuals volunteered their time or performed community service at our facility for a total of 4,010 hours. Additionally, countless hours were logged by volunteers at the 250 food programs we supply.

The GBFB held its annual Volunteer Breakfast on April 23rd at Easy Does It, Inc. in Leesport to thank and honor these wonderful individuals. More than 200 partners in the fight against hunger joined us for this special occasion.

The Breakfast also gives the GBFB the opportunity to additionally recognize two individuals who have made a significant impact to alleviate hunger in our community. Pat Vlasak (pictured with GBFB Program Manager Deb Mest), of the Berks County Intermediate Unit's Migrant Education Program, was presented the Vicki Krick Above and Beyond Award. "Pat works tirelessly to help these children. In addition to all else she does to provide for their well-being, she can be seen here several days a week picking up food to nourish these kids who are living in extreme poverty," said Deb Mest.

John Goshert (pictured with Mest), coordinator of the Wilson Food Pantry located in West Lawn, was presented with the Volunteer of the Year Award. John has been instrumental in the establishment and success of the pantry which started in March 2008. Today, the pantry assists more than 40 households a month. "From the very first distribution, John's passion and determination to help the hungry was evident. The success of this relatively new pantry is due in large part to John's efforts," said Mest.



The GBFB's Programs Department show off their outfits for the Breakfast's "Our Volunteers Rock" 50s theme.



## Help to Bag Hunger

Shop at Redner's Warehouse Markets between August 30 and October 3 and help to Bag Hunger in our community!

Store cashiers at all 38 Redner's Warehouse Markets located in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware will ask all customers to donate \$1 when they check out. The GBFB will receive the proceeds from the 13 Redner's Warehouse Markets in our service area.

According to Eric White, Consumer Communications Specialist for Redner's, "Right now, we (Redner's) recognize the importance food banks are playing in the lives of many people. As a member of the community, and certainly as being a grocer, we feel that we can bring to light the problem of hunger in our local communities to our customers."

Redner's has been a long-time active partner for the GBFB in the fight against hunger. They are currently one of our top local food donors – nearly 100,000 pounds of product were donated in the past year. Recent foods donated include cheese, fruit juices, and fresh cherries. All of the products received from Redner's are distributed by the GBFB to the food pantries as well as soup kitchen and shelter meal programs we supply. Additionally, various Redner family members have been on our Board of Directors through the years and instrumental in our growth and in achieving our mission.



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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.

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## From the Executive Director



Soon I will be celebrating my 20th year at the Greater Berks Food Bank. When I first walked through its doors, I could never have imagined the extent poverty in our country would climb over the next two decades.

The increase of poverty can be depicted by the number of people enrolled in the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) formerly titled Food Stamps. 1,339,541 Pennsylvanians participated in SNAP in April 2009. Five years ago in April 2004, the number of people receiving benefits was 965,242. Just in the past few months, from March to April, another 13,270 Pennsylvania residents joined the SNAP rolls.

This rapid growth is not unique to Pennsylvania, nationally, in April 2009, SNAP/Food Stamp participation was 33,758,104 people, the highest participation level on record, and an increase of nearly 601,000 individuals from March 2009, the prior record level. Over the past twelve months, participation has grown by 5.6 million individuals.

In the above statistics are 439,000 children living with hunger in Pennsylvania. Obviously, ending hunger probably won't happen in my lifetime. But because of your generosity, support, and prayers the GBFB will continue to supply nourishment for those in need, especially the young children through its Kids Cafes and Weekender Backpack Programs.

## Letter Carriers deliver more than expected!

The 17th Annual National Association of Letter Carriers "Stamp Out Hunger" Food Drive, held on May 10, proved to be the most successful food drive in recent years. Almost 79,000 pounds of food was donated by postal customers and collected by their letter carriers – a 12,000 pound increase from last year's food drive.



Senator Michael O'Pake, seen with GBFB Executive Director Peg Bianca and members of N.A.L.C. Branch 258, personally dropped off the food his office collected in support of this food drive.

The fact the food collected increased so dramatically goes to show that when times are hard, the residents of Berks County step up to help their neighbors in need.

The food collected was delivered by the letter carriers to the Postal Annex building on North 5th Street, Reading, where it was packed by more than 100 volunteers throughout the day. The food was then transferred to the GBFB warehouse and distributed to the pantries we supply throughout the summer months.

## Kellogg's makes huge cereal donation

Reports show that one in eight Americans is struggling with hunger. The recent "Child Food Insecurity in the U.S., 2005-2007" study stated one in six American children lack adequate access to food. The current economic crisis has sent many families to seek food assistance for the very first time. Locally, the GBFB has noted a 43% increase in the number of households seeking food assistance for the very first time in the first six months of 2009 compared to the same time period in 2007, before the current recession began. Recognizing all of this, Kellogg Company decided to donate an entire day's production of cereal to the Feeding America network of food banks in June.

The GBFB received 60 skids (or 12,960 boxes) of cereal as part of this program. Kellogg's timing could not have been better. Summer is often the busiest time of year for many pantries as the kids are home for summer and not receiving lunch and sometimes breakfast at school. Cereal is a great kid-friendly food for us to distribute – it is easy for kids to prepare and is vitamin fortified.

Kellogg's donation will make a huge impact in the fight against hunger locally and nationally this summer.



## Agency Feature - Hope Rescue Mission

For more than 115 years, Hope Rescue Mission of Reading has been providing the basic necessities of life for the men of the Reading and Berks area who need a hand in returning to a productive life.

The Mission offers two programs. The Disciples of Hope program provides long-term housing to men who have demonstrated a sincere desire to change their lives. The 32 participants receive their room and board and a small stipend in exchange for working six days a week in various positions at the Mission – manning the Outlet Store, driving the pick up vans, tending the facilities and grounds, and preparing cardboard and rags for recycling. Through the jobs the men gain responsibility and a sense of purpose.

The Safe Haven program offers a bed and a meal to approximately 50 men a day



who come to them directly from the streets or a dysfunctional situation. The men are also offered the opportunity to apply for the Disciples program. The Mission additionally provides all residents with access to drug and alcohol counseling and GED and life skills classes.

Both programs are currently at capacity as the number of residents has doubled in the past two years – a result of the current economic situation.

All of the work of the Mission is funded through proceeds from the Outlet Store, the sale of recyclables, the generosity of the community, and partnerships with groups such as the Greater Berks Food Bank. The Mission has been a member agency of the GBFB since 1999. In the past year we have supplied almost 40,000 pounds of food with a value of nearly \$57,000 to support the work of the Hope Rescue Mission.

## We thank the following businesses and organizations that recently hosted food and fund drives:

- 🍌 Allegheny Lutheran Church
- 🍌 Alleghenyville Grange
- 🍌 Alpha Sigma Phi Fraternity, Albright College
- 🍌 Anthony's Barber Shop, Wyomissing
- 🍌 Christ Church U.C.C., Temple
- 🍌 Christian Moses Weikel Memorial
- 🍌 Curves – Muhlenberg & Wyomissing
- 🍌 Daniel Boone Middle School
- 🍌 Eastern PA Water Pollution Control Operators Assoc.
- 🍌 Fleetwood Area High School
- 🍌 J.C. Penney Outlet Store
- 🍌 Junior League of Reading, PA
- 🍌 Keller Williams Realty Group
- 🍌 Muhlenberg Elementary Center
- 🍌 National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 258
- 🍌 Old Navy, Wyomissing
- 🍌 Pollack Furs
- 🍌 Reading Express Football Team
- 🍌 Reading Hospital & Medical Center Laboratory
- 🍌 Reading Symphony Orchestra
- 🍌 Reformation Lutheran, Reading
- 🍌 Schuylkill Valley H.S. National Honor Society
- 🍌 Sovereign Bank Community Involvement Committee
- 🍌 Teleflex Medical Inc.
- 🍌 Twin Valley Middle School Leo Club
- 🍌 Tyson Schoener Elementary PTO
- 🍌 Vist Financial
- 🍌 Waddell & Reed Financial Advisors, Wyomissing
- 🍌 Willow Hollow Ladies Golf League
- 🍌 WIOV – Citadel Broadcasting
- 🍌 Wyomissing Area Soccer Club

## Thank you Met Ed!

The results of Met Ed's (a First Energy Company) annual Harvest for Hunger campaign have been tallied and \$22,120 was raised by their employees to feed those in need in our community!

Karen Baxter, Met Ed Area Manager, and Terry Gilman, First Energy Manager of Community Involvement for Pennsylvania (pictured right), recently presented the proceeds at a GBFB Board of Directors meeting. Accepting on behalf of the GBFB was Brian Lowe, secretary of the GBFB Board and First Energy Manager of Revenue Operations for Pennsylvania.

A golf tournament is planned for September 25. Proceeds from the tournament will help Met Ed exceed their goal of raising \$25,000 this year for the GBFB and will put the total amount raised during the eight years of the campaign over \$150,000.

If your business or organization would like to sponsor a hole at the tournament contact Doug Long at the GBFB at [dslong@feedingamerica.org](mailto:dslong@feedingamerica.org) for the registration form. Hole sponsorships are available for \$50.

## Wal-Mart stores begin food donation program

Wal-Mart Stores Inc., through the efforts of Feeding America, recently started donating food from their Supercenter stores to food banks across the nation. The GBFB, and our network of agencies, will benefit greatly from the breads, meats, produce, dairy, and grocery items donated at the Temple, Bechtelsville, Pottsville, and Tamaqua stores. It is projected that more than 25,000 pounds of food will be received from each store annually.

This food donation program extends Wal-Mart's tremendous commitment to support food banks across the nation. The company has awarded millions of dollars in grants and made substantial food donations from their distribution centers. Locally, the Wal-Mart Distribution Center located in Pottsville was the GBFB's second highest volume food donor last year and also awarded a \$2,500 grant to help distribute food in Schuylkill County. A \$10,000 grant was received in 2008 from the Wal-Mart Foundation to support our Mt. Penn Elementary Weekender Backpack Program which distributed 100 backpacks of food a week this past school year to kids in need. The Exeter Wal-Mart has also awarded several generous grants in support of our Kids Cafe and other programs. According to the Exeter Wal-Mart store manager, Paul Lippi, "My store does not do anything for recognition, we are happy to do it for the betterment of the community, especially the kids, and that is how the whole corporation feels as well."



## Greater Berks Food Bank

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About Our Organization . . .  
The Greater Berks Food Bank, established in 1983, collects, purchases, stores, and distributes over four million pounds of food annually to the more than 250 programs which feed the hungry in Berks, Schuylkill, and western Montgomery Counties.



## Ways you can help...

🍌 **Feeding America** has designated **September as Hunger Action Month 2009** - a time for food banks and their supporters across the nation to raise hunger awareness. In honor of this month, consider hosting a fundraiser or food drive at your place of work, school, place of worship, or amongst your friends and family or making a gift in memory of someone special. Fundraisers can be simple to plan – hold a “jeans day” at your office, have a spaghetti dinner at your church, or host a Pampered Chef party at your home (a portion of Pampered Chef party proceeds benefit the GBFB). Big or small – all fundraisers help.  
**Remember, for every \$1 you raise we are able to acquire \$20 worth of food!**

## Save these dates!

- 🍌 **Saturday, September 12** – Western Berks Family Expo at Conrad Weiser Middle School.
- 🍌 **Wednesday, September 16** – United Way Day of Caring volunteer project.
- 🍌 **Friday, September 25** – 5th Annual Met Ed Harvest for Hunger Golf Tournament (see article).
- 🍌 **Sunday, October 11** – the 28th Annual Reading CROP Walk will take place at Grings Mill Park. Please encourage your church to participate. The Walk distributes 25% of its proceeds to the GBFB and the remainder to international hunger relief.
- 🍌 **Thursday, October 15** – the 26th World Food Day Breakfast will be held at the Reading Crownne Plaza. Please join us and our community of supporters at this special event.

## We apologize...

We are sorry that you recently may have received two copies of our “School’s Out” summer fundraising campaign mailer. A mistake was made by the mailing house that mails these packages for us and unfortunately that meant our list of donors and supporters each received two mailers. Please realize we received a full monetary credit from the mailing house for their mistake – no money was taken away from our mission of feeding the hungry to send you two mailers. Also, please know the Greater Berks Food Bank does not sell or lend our mail list to any other organizations. Again, we are terribly sorry for any confusion and inconvenience and we are extremely grateful for your support.

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