

NOURISHING NEWS

FROM THE GREATER BERKS FOOD BANK

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GBFB celebrates executive director's 20th anniversary

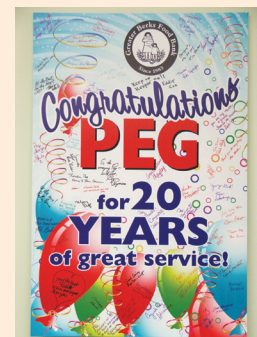
On Friday, March 12, more than sixty individuals - current and former Greater Berks Food Bank (GBFB) Board members, staff members, and friends - surprised executive director, Peg Bianca, with a breakfast event celebrating her 20th anniversary of leading our community's fight against hunger.



The event, held at the Bistro on the Green at Flying Hills, provided the group the opportunity to acknowledge Bianca for her successes in growing the organization in response to our community's rising poverty levels.

individuals. Jim and Anna Connors, co-chairs of the capital campaign that funded the construction of our current facility in 1995, discussed Peg's determination and guidance through that important process. Current Board member, Tyna Kaltenbaugh, spoke about Peg's passion for kids' programs, specifically the Kids Cafe and the Weekender Backpack Programs. Current Board president, Jay Mahoney, described the important role Peg plays for the GBFB today, as it now distributes more than four million pounds of food annually and has a staff of fourteen individuals. Mahoney also pointed out to the group that no money was taken from the GBFB's programs to pay for the event as all expenses were covered through gifts from current and former Board members. State Senator Michael O'Pake also attended and spoke about the admiration he has for Peg

after years of working with her to support hunger programs and he honored her with a proclamation from the state's Senate.



The GBFB's current Board also presented Peg with two special gifts. A framed timeline highlighting Peg's two decades of leadership was

presented at the event and a tree, with a ground marker commemorating the anniversary, will be planted on the GBFB's grounds this spring.



The morning's program included several speakers who highlighted Peg's impact on the organization as well as

provided personal testimonials to her success as a leader. Former Board member, Gloria Love, reflected about when Peg was hired - a time when the GBFB distributed 1.2 million pounds of food annually out of an out-dated city warehouse and had a staff of only five



GBFB's Peg Bianca appointed to two state committees

Recognizing the valued input she would offer as a veteran in the fight against hunger, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Secretary, Russell Redding, recently appointed the GBFB's executive director, Peg Bianca, to serve on two important state committees.

In January, Bianca was appointed to a three year term as a Food and Nutrition Advocate Representative on the Emergency Food Assistance Advisory Committee (EFAAC). The committee's goal is to best direct the administration of the Department of Agriculture's food assistance programs. Also, in March, Bianca was appointed by Redding to a two year term on the EFAAC's Best Management Practices Committee. The purpose of this committee is to look at the best management practices of all participating agencies in the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP).

"I appreciate the Secretary's trust in me and I look forward to the opportunity to improve the efforts to feed the hungry across our state," stated Bianca.

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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



In the article below, you can read some of the highlights of the recent Hunger Study. I can't say that I am surprised by the findings. On a daily basis, the staff of the Greater Berks Food Bank and I hear and see first hand the stories of those who need help. The typical recipient is not the welfare mother of 5, but a person who has unfortunately become what we refer to as the "working poor" or a person who has found themselves the victim of a job loss as a result of the current dismal economy. Perhaps most tragic, more than one-third of those receiving assistance are children under 18 years of age.

Unfortunately, even though the recession has been declared over, the recovery is not coming fast enough. In reading this morning's Reading Eagle (April 6), I see Berks County's jobless rate for February was 9.9% - the highest rate since June 1983. The jobless rate for the city of Reading was a staggering 14.3% and the rate for Schuylkill County was 11.1%. The article went on to say that the manufacturing job segment was by far the biggest hit with job losses in the past year. These are the jobs that middle-class families have relied on for generations - and they are now probably lost for good.

What do the findings of the Hunger Study and the most recent job statistics mean for us? They mean that we must not stop the rapid rate of expansion we have experienced in the past couple years. If a community is under-served we need to add a new program. It means we need to keep adding programs to feed kids. Recently, we have added two Weekender Backpack sites - at Daniel Boone Elementary and Schuylkill Valley Elementary - and started a new program we call Produce for Kids (see related article).

As always, we can not do this work alone. I thank every single one of you for supporting us through financial donations, food drives, volunteering, or simply by offering moral support. Together we can assure that anyone who needs food on their plate will have it.

Hunger Study results released

About a year and a half ago, the GBFB began the extensive undertaking of participating in the Hunger in America 2010 Study, a national study conducted for Feeding America. In early 2009, GBFB staff members and volunteers, provided by the United Way of Berks County, conducted 252 client interviews at 31 member agency food pantries and soup kitchens. The results were released in February.

The study provided a detailed picture of hunger in our area, including who is using food pantries and soup kitchens. Some of the local highlights are:

- About one in ten Berks County residents visit a food pantry or soup kitchen annually.
- The GBFB provides emergency food assistance for 60,800 different people annually.
- 36% of those receiving food assistance are children under 18 years of age.
- 42.7% of households visiting a pantry have at least one employed adult.

- 56% of clients are non-Hispanic white; 30% are Hispanic; and 12% are non-Hispanic black.
- 62% of households visiting pantries have 3 or less members. Average household size is 3.2 people.
- 78% of the families surveyed with children sometimes have trouble getting food or have to eat less or skip meals.
- 93.3% of pantry clients and 100% of soup kitchen clients are U.S. citizens.

According to executive director Peg Bianca, the GBFB plans to use the information to step up efforts to feed children and seniors as well to shatter stereotypes of who is hungry in our community.

Agency Feature - Conewago Pottsville

For nearly two years, the Conewago facility in Pottsville, Schuylkill County has offered comprehensive detox and inpatient drug and alcohol programs, already bettering the lives of almost 1,000 individuals.

After an average 4 day initial stay in the detox center, most patients stay for 28 to 90 days in the inpatient "end program." This non-profit treatment center not only helps individuals overcome their drug and alcohol addiction, but it also provides them with the life skills they will need to succeed as they transition back to home.

The facility is currently going through a major renovation that will not only provide refurbished living



quarters and a larger kitchen, but also the ability to treat many more inpatients. The renovation is expected to be completed in April and will expand the number of inpatient beds from eleven to thirty-two.

Residents are served three meals a day as well as an evening snack. Citing that the facility is only reimbursed \$4.75 a day to feed each resident, Conewago's executive director, Luis LaBoy, states, "The Greater Berks Food Bank has been a great help in cutting food costs, especially for lunch and snacks." In 2009, the facility received nearly 26,000 pounds of food from the GBFB, valued at more than \$41,000.

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

- ✓ Berks County Intermediate Unit
- ✓ Berks Hematology-Oncology Assoc.
- ✓ BJ's Wholesale Club
- ✓ Bosco's Department Stores
- ✓ Can Corporation of America
- ✓ Cornwall Terrace Elementary School
- ✓ First United Church of Christ
- ✓ Frontier Communications
- ✓ Gateway School
- ✓ Homewood Suites by Hilton
- ✓ Keystone Soldiers
- ✓ Leadership Berks
- ✓ Lutheran Home at Topton
- ✓ M.L. Lausch Elementary School
- ✓ Manorcare Health Services
- ✓ Mifflin Park Elementary School
- ✓ Mt. Penn Primary Center
- ✓ National Penn Bank
- ✓ Northwest Elementary School
- ✓ Oley Valley High School
- ✓ Reading Eagle Company/Berks Jazz Fest
- ✓ Reading Hospital Critical Care Unit
- ✓ Reading Hospital Psychiatry Dept.
- ✓ Reformed Congregation Oheb Sholom
- ✓ Reiffon School
- ✓ Representative Jim Cox's District Office
- ✓ Rotary Club of Muhlenberg
- ✓ Shiloh Hills Elementary School
- ✓ Southern Middle School
- ✓ St. Marks United Church of Christ
- ✓ Sun Federal Credit Union
- ✓ The King's Academy
- ✓ Weaver's Hardware Company
- ✓ West Reading Elementary School
- ✓ West Wyomissing Elementary School
- ✓ Woodforest National Bank

*From 11/26/09 to 3/23/10 *

Met Ed campaign a success again!



Met Ed, a First Energy Company, held its ninth annual Harvest for Hunger fundraising campaign throughout the month of March to benefit the GBFB. Met Ed officials expect to once again top their goal of \$25,000, which will include proceeds from a golf tournament planned for September. In its nine year history, the campaign has raised

over \$150,000 to help those struggling with hunger in our community!

Fundraising events included in this year's campaign were: Met Ed's Got Talent (winner William McCurdy is pictured); a Wii bowling tournament; a book sale; and a car wash.

If your company is interested in initiating a similar company-wide fundraising campaign please contact Doug Long at the GBFB at 610-926-5802 ext. 212.

Produce for Kids

On a warm and sunny Friday afternoon in March, the GBFB held the first distribution for its new Produce for Kids program. GBFB volunteers and staff handed more than 700 students at Tyson Schoener Elementary, Reading, a bag filled with two bunches of grapes and two chocolate milks for a healthy weekend snack. Fresh produce will be distributed to city elementary schools on as many Friday afternoons as possible – dependent on produce donations.



The program's feasibility was made possible by the addition of a new truck awarded through the Wal-Mart Foundation last fall.

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...

- 🍎 **Donate fresh produce from your garden or farm.** Are you a home gardener or a local farmer? Plant an extra row or two and donate the harvest to the Greater Berks Food Bank. Fresh veggies and fruit are a delicious and healthy food to distribute to those in need. Produce can be dropped off at our warehouse Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- 🍎 **Create a legacy in your estate plan.** You can make a lasting commitment to feeding the hungry by naming the GBFB in your will. We recommend that you work with an attorney to ensure that your wishes are carried out.

**Please support the 18th Annual
National Association of Letter Carriers
“Stamp Out Hunger” Food Drive
on Saturday, May 8**

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