



**GREATER
CHICAGO
- FOOD -
DEPOSITORY**

FALL 2019

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

**'HUGGING PANTRY'
SPREADS THE LOVE
IN GRAND CROSSING
P. 3**

**SCENES FROM SUMMER:
RIDING ALONG WITH
THE LUNCH BUS
P. 4 AND 5**

**WHY CUTTING SNAP
IS BAD POLICY
P. 6**

Photo credit: Alyssa Schukar for the
Greater Chicago Food Depository

Calendar of Events

SEPTEMBER

Hunger Action Month

chicagosfoodbank.org/HAM

OCTOBER–NOVEMBER

Construction Chicago, a benefit for the Food Depository

October 11–November 3

constructionchicago.org

NOVEMBER

Thanksgiving

November 28 and 29

Food Depository closed

Connect with us!



@FoodDepository



/FoodDepository



@FoodDepository



/FoodDepository



Search Greater Chicago Food Depository

PERSPECTIVE

A few weeks ago, children throughout Chicago and Cook County bounded into classrooms with all of the excitement and anticipation that comes with each new school year.

Summer is over – an inevitability that seems to come a little sooner each year. For parents, it's a dizzying, bittersweet time, both reflective and forward-looking. For kids, it's a fresh start, a chance to reach for new heights.

Many of those children would be ill-prepared to face the new school year without the year-round support of our community partners – food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters that provide consistent access to food. The Greater Chicago Food Depository also partners with libraries, parks and many other organizations to provide free summer meals for anyone under 18.

We're so grateful for the hard work and support of our summer meal partners and volunteers in working to ensure that no kid goes hungry. You'll learn more about their impact and enjoy some beautiful photos on pages 4 and 5 of this issue.

Though school is starting, now is no time for complacency. The federal safety net is again under attack, including planned cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that would result in more than 3 million Americans losing their food assistance.

Families with children are among those who stand to be most affected, as you'll read in the page 6 interview with our new board member Diane Schanzenbach, a professor at Northwestern University.

When we invest in our children, we are investing in the adults that they will become, as Diane so eloquently put it. Helping lift families out of poverty is fiscally prudent.

The opposite is also true. When we fail to invest in our children now, we're bankrupting their future.

Now, as school begins, is the perfect time to envision healthy, hopeful lives for our children. That must begin with food. Please join us in helping them to reach new heights.

No child should go hungry.

With gratitude,



Kate Maehr
Executive Director and CEO



GRAND CROSSING PANTRY AIMS TO TREAT VISITORS LIKE FAMILY

Madeline "Mama" Gantt hugs every guest at the New Life Covenant Southeast pantry in Grand Crossing.

When 35-year-old Tiffany Evans visited the New Life Covenant Southeast food pantry for the first time, she was greeted by a roar of supportive cheers from workers and visitors.

It's a ritual at the pantry in the South Side neighborhood of Grand Crossing. As guests reach the front of the line to receive food, newcomers are announced by the volunteer greeter – a call that prompts the group to erupt in applause.

"It makes you feel love, like, welcome," Evans said on a recent summer afternoon at the pantry.

And, as for every visitor who walks through the doors, her welcome also included a warm embrace.

Since opening five years ago, New Life Covenant Southeast has been nicknamed "the hugging pantry" by its patrons.

The pantry – one of the Greater Chicago Food Depository's partner agencies – prides itself on being a "family," according to coordinator Jackie Kabir, and treating their clients as such. It feeds between 400 and 600 households each month, she said.

"We don't treat them like people who just come through here," Kabir said. "They're an extension of what we do and what we feel like our mission is."

The need is immense in the Greater Grand Crossing community. More than half of the population lives below 185 percent of the federal poverty line – a common income threshold for some forms of government assistance, according to American Community Survey Census data.

"It makes you feel love, like, welcome," Evans said on a recent summer afternoon at the pantry.

The mission is personal for Kabir, who has been running the pantry for the last two and a half years.

After losing her job as a technical consultant at the same time as going through a divorce, Kabir said, she struggled to feed her family.

"It was a very emotional experience for me because I never thought in a million years that I would be someone who needed a food pantry," Kabir said of her first visit there. "So I stood in line... walked through the doors just like any other client, tears in my eyes, because here I am, somebody who used to work a \$100,000-a-year job who couldn't feed her family."

The treatment she received left a lasting impression.

"How everybody treated me, how they hugged me when I walked in the door, told me I was going to be okay, this was not going to be my situation always, things like that, (it was) very encouraging," Kabir said.

William McKenzie said he feels the love and respect when he comes to New Life Covenant. The 70-year-old retired housekeeping worker visits the pantry to get groceries for his household, which includes his wife, his 24-year-old daughter and his 7-year-old grandson.

He receives Social Security as well, but he said he's grateful for the pantry because it allows him to have what he needs rather than having to ask a neighbor if he's without.

"You do what you gotta do to survive, to make it," said McKenzie.

To read the full story, visit *The Hunger Beat*, the official blog of the Food Depository, at chicagosfoodbank.org/blog.

Jackie Kabir with daughter, Aziza.



AS SUMMER ENDS, A REFLECTION ON ONE DAY OF FEEDING CHILDREN IN CHICAGO

Summer is a particularly challenging time of year for many children who lack consistent access to food when school is not in session.

The Greater Chicago Food Depository is one of the local sponsors of the federally-funded summer meals program, which provides free summer meals to any child in need. This summer, the Food Depository distributed more than 447,000 summer meals across 231 sites in Chicago and throughout Cook County.

The Lunch Bus is a relatively small but important piece of our summer meal program. The refrigerated bus carries the free meals to 15 sites in Chicago and in the suburbs.

These photos were taken on one July day on the Lunch Bus city route by photographer Alyssa Schukar. They provide a glimpse of the impact.



One out of six children in Cook County – almost 185,000 children – experience food insecurity on any given day, according to Feeding America’s annual Map the Meal Gap report. Even one is too many.

Sarah Budig and Rhea Fleming, members of the Hunger Action Corps, an AmeriCorps program, serve meals at Davis Square Park in the New City community area on Chicago’s South Side. Each summer, the Food Depository’s Corps members and volunteer drivers deliver thousands of meals in the Lunch Bus.



This summer, the Lunch Bus served more than 12,000 meals to children. The Food Depository contracts with Gourmet Gorilla, which makes the lunches.





Cynthia, mother of two sons ages 11 and 9, recently moved her family from Birmingham, Alabama to Chicago's Austin neighborhood. "There's a great need here in this community," the mother said. "I like these little meals – they're good and fresh and healthy."

Each of the community areas served by the Lunch Bus city route – New City, South Lawndale, Austin, McKinley Park and West Englewood – have a child poverty rate of more than 40% according to Census data tracked by the Food Depository. For context, the child poverty rate is 27% for Chicago as a whole and 13% in the Cook County suburbs.



Children pose for a photo in front the West Englewood Library. The Food Depository partners with libraries, parks, schools and other organizations to provide summer meals when school is out and after-school meals during the school year.



Learn more about how you can help by visiting chicagosfoodbank.org

WHY KICKING 3 MILLION PEOPLE OFF OF SNAP IS BAD POLICY

Q&A with New Food Depository Board Member Diane Schanzenbach



Diane Schanzenbach

Most of the 3.1 million Americans projected to lose federal food assistance because of the Trump administration's latest proposal are working families with children, older adults or people with disabilities, according to policy experts.

The administration seeks to restrict the ability of states to use what's known as "broad-based categorical eligibility," which allows some people to receive SNAP benefits if they receive certain other forms of government assistance.

"The truth is, overwhelmingly, SNAP goes to low-income families with children, with disabled or elderly members, or to very poor adults to help them afford the food they need," said Diane Schanzenbach, director of the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University.

Kicking more than 3 million Americans off needed food assistance is bad public policy, said Schanzenbach, who recently joined the Greater Chicago Food Depository's board of directors.

Q. Why is broad-based categorical eligibility important?

A. When we look at the people who are eligible for SNAP under categorical eligibility, they're overwhelmingly families who have elderly or disabled members, or children. Among those without elderly or disabled members, most of them are also workers.

These families aren't generally politically controversial. Everyone agrees that we want to give working families with children and high childcare expenses the boost that they need to purchase the groceries that they need. It surprises me across the board that this is something that's being aimed at for policy change.

Q. The administration has also touted these proposed SNAP cuts as a savings. Aren't there greater long-term costs if people aren't receiving food assistance?

A. Absolutely. When families have access to SNAP, other economic hardships go down. They're less likely to have a bill sent to collections, they're less likely to forgo medical treatment because they can't afford it. They spend the benefits in their local communities, so there is also an economic multiplier effect that helps the local economy.

When young kids especially have access to SNAP and have the resources they need to eat the food that they need, they grow up to be healthier and more economically stable when they're adults.

When we spend on kids, part of that is an investment in the adult that they grow up to be. If we are going to take away that investment, especially from the low-income working families that would be hurt by eliminating broad-based categorical eligibility, I would expect that kids in these families would be hurt – not only in the short run, but also in the long run.

Q. Many children who receive free school meals would also be affected, right?

A. Correct. One of my favorite policies out there is automatic eligibility for free school meals for SNAP participants. It saves time and paperwork for schools. It makes sure that kids have access to the school meals that they need.

Loss of SNAP eligibility will mean that a lot of these kids will lose access to subsidized school meals. They will likely still be eligible for reduced-priced lunch, but we know empirically that not everyone applies for that for various reasons. Some kids will slip through the cracks.

Q. Based on the economic research that you've seen, should we be making the case to expand SNAP, instead of simply fighting to keep it as it is?

A. There would be many benefits to a modest expansion of SNAP. A lot of people in my field think that increasing maximum benefits by about 20 or 30% would really help low-income families – starting with improving their food security but then spilling over into other things. We should be talking about expanding SNAP, not contracting it.

Voice your opposition to this harmful rule change at chicagosfoodbank.org/protectsnap

PROJECT NOURISH HELPS FOOD DEPOSITORY EVOLVE

The remodeled volunteer orientation room is now brighter and more inviting, particularly for youth groups.

There's a renewed energy and feeling of community at 4100 W. Ann Lurie Place, thanks to the generous donors who contributed to Phase 1 of the Nourish Campaign. We are so grateful.

This summer, the building reopened after significant renovations designed to strengthen the Greater Chicago Food Depository's mission toward ending hunger. Throughout, the building is more inviting with more places for staff, volunteers and other community members to gather and collaborate.

Volunteers can place their belongings in the lockers in the new volunteer lounge, where they might also enjoy a meal before or after their experience. Children can learn about food insecurity in the new youth-focused portion of the improved volunteer orientation room. Large corporate groups and other organizations can meet in remodeled conference rooms to debrief their experiences.

There is additional space for Food Depository staff to informally convene. The new atrium is an example of an "our space," where staff and volunteers can gather and enjoy a meal or a cup of coffee, or host informal meetings.

Other Project Nourish upgrades at the Food Depository include:

- **A warmer, more inviting volunteer experience.**

Volunteers are the beating heart of our mission to end hunger. The volunteer orientation room was renovated to be more welcoming to youth groups, in particular, and is now decorated with inspirational quotes on the wall.

- **More cold storage for fresh food into the community**

In recent years, the Food Depository has increased its distribution of fresh fruits, vegetables and proteins to people facing hunger in our communities. To better accommodate fresh food, we expanded cold storage by more than 50 percent.

- **A transformed Chicago's Community Kitchens area.**

Chicago's Community Kitchens, the Food Depository's culinary job training program, helps end hunger by preparing students for meaningful employment in the food service industry. Now, the program has additional classroom and office space for educational programming, such as seminars with chef mentors.

- **More efficient shipping and receiving docks.**

In recent years, the Food Depository shifted to an all-delivery model to save our partner agencies money and time, while also improving food safety. As part of the building upgrades, we remodeled the shipping and receiving docks to be more efficient.

Stay tuned for more big news on the second phase of Project Nourish, which will include expanding into meal delivery for older adults and people with disabilities. As we strive to accomplish these goals toward ending hunger, we need your continued support.

Learn more about how you can help at chicagosfoodbank.org/projectnourish

The new volunteer lounge provides a space for volunteers to gather before and after a repack session.





**GREATER
CHICAGO**
- FOOD -
DEPOSITORY

Greater Chicago Food Depository
4100 W. Ann Lurie Place
Chicago, IL 60632

773-247-FOOD
chicagosfoodbank.org

Non-Profit Organ.

U.S. Postage

PAID

Chicago, IL

Permit No. 1011



MEMBER OF
**FEEDING
AMERICA**



Thanks to all who participated in the 34th Annual Hunger Walk!

Thousands of people gathered in Jackson Park on Sept. 7 for the 34th Annual Hunger Walk – another glorious and uplifting day together in the mission to end hunger.

We are so grateful to all participants who made it such a special day and helped to raise crucial funds for food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters in Chicago and throughout Cook County. Simply put, this event is critical to the operation of those partner agencies and the health of their communities.

Thank you to our premier sponsors, including Conagra Brands, Griffith Foods, Jewel-Osco, ABC 7, as well as our event sponsors, US Foods and PepsiCo.

Let's do it all over again next year!

**CONNECT
WITH US!**



@FoodDepository



@FoodDepository



Search Greater Chicago
Food Depository



/FoodDepository



/FoodDepository