

Greater Cleveland Food Bank
COVID-19 Update
Week of May 4– May 8, 2020: Week in Review

The first week in May typically brings all sorts of things -- prom, school field trips, summer vacation plans. This year, however, all of that has changed. This past week brought news about the status of our nation's children and the fact that food insecurity among this most vulnerable group is being experienced at a rate that is unprecedented in modern times. The study from the Brookings Institution provides this gut wrenching data as well as suggestions on how the government can provide more resources to help families with children. According to this research, almost 1 in 5 households with children 12 and under are food insecure. In addition, more children are not eating enough – a rate 3 times as high as in 2008 during the Great Recession. It is no surprise that one of the first items on the “how to help” list is an increase in SNAP benefits. There will be many long lasting results of this pandemic and, if we don't act soon, the effects on our children will be one that we'll live with for years to come. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/05/06/the-covid-19-crisis-has-already-left-too-many-children-hungry-in-america/>

The Data Team tracks many items to help us better measure the impact of our work and that of our partners. They've also been gathering stats and measuring current activities since the COVID-19 disaster upended our lives. Here are a few items that demonstrate the impact of our work to the community and people living here:

- We have distributed 670,000 more pounds of food than in the same time last year.
- We have purchased three times more food than this same time last year. In part this is a result of needing more food and more shelf stable product but, our donated product has also been reduced by more than 40%.
- We have served 13,539 new families during this time frame. (This is an unduplicated number! Each of these were new, unique families. Over 8,000 of these new families were added in the month of April alone and this doesn't include last night's distribution).
- We have distributed 23,334 disaster boxes (this doesn't include last night's distribution).
- We have provided 42,396 backpacks so far – about 9,100 weekly. Typically, we provide about 4,500 each week so we are doubling our distribution through one of our most expensive programs in order to serve children out of school.

Planning continues for the reintegration of our volunteers back in to our daily work and we are making good progress – it will take lots of coordination among many departments. We are examining each process and protocol with a COVID overlay – the safety of volunteers, staff and clients is of primary importance. Their work will be critical to our summer feeding program as we have lots of children to feed this summer and our volunteer assistance is integral to a successful program.

Channel 3's mask project is gaining traction. At Thursday's distribution, a member of the Cleveland Police Department gave us masks that his wife made as she heard about it on the news. Lots of folks are jumping in and we are excited to see the community come together to help our partner agencies and volunteers stay safe.

Thanks to the children of Asmita and John Goldblum – Asmita is one of our Board members – staff enjoyed a delicious lunch today provided by our Market partner, Edwin's. They did this in honor of their mom for Mother's Day!

See today's Plain Dealer for a strong and thoughtful essay by Kristin: Cleveland After COVID-19. <https://www.cleveland.com/opinion/2020/05/our-community-has-rallied-to-battle-the-coronavirus-storm-together-but-too-many-are-still-on-unseaworthy-boats-kristin-warzocha.html>

During Thursday's distribution, a couple called Kristin over to their car and told her they had something in the trunk for us. It was a case of water with a note –thanking us for our work and wanting us to have water while we worked. That kind gesture – looking out for us while they were waiting for food. We live in a special community!

Again, one of our wonderful supporters sends us encouraging words: "Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors." African Proverb. Appropriate for these challenging times... Have a wonderful weekend. Happy Mother's Day!

Focus on possibility and who can help and how.

Mary LaVigne Butler, VP of External Affairs