

INSIDE SCOOP



Eastern Illinois
Foodbank



HUNGER DOESN'T TAKE A **SUMMER BREAK**

For many children, summer represents a carefree and joyful time full of sunny days and adventures. But for the families living with food insecurity, summertime can present extra challenges. **Of the over 100,000 people in eastern Illinois who struggle with hunger, one in five are children.** When school dismisses each year, thousands of children no longer have access to school breakfast and lunch programs, putting an additional burden on their families' budgets as they struggle to provide extra meals each day. In addition, many hard-working families must stretch their paychecks to include day care expenses during the summer months. These added costs make it even harder to afford a monthly food budget, and some families find themselves falling short.

“ The food from the Foodbank saves us money on a number of items typically bought in stores and **the staff has been incredibly supportive.**

— Lori Rogers, Feeding Our Kids board member

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The negative effects of child hunger are widely documented and include physical, mental, and emotional development impairment, leading to an increased risk for hungry children to fall behind nutritionally and developmentally by the time school reopens in the fall. Food-insecure children are more likely to repeat a grade in elementary school, have significantly lower mathematics

scores, experience developmental deficiency in areas like language and motor skills, and have social and behavioral problems. Known as the “summer slide,” children who do not get enough nutrition during the summer months are estimated to start school two months behind their peers in reading ability. Unfortunately, these effects are cumulative and can be life-lasting, as adults in the workforce who experienced child hunger are not as physically, mentally, or socially prepared to perform, with lower levels of educational and technical skills.

Eastern Illinois Foodbank is committed to ensuring all children in our 18-county service area have access to healthy meals, particularly during the summer months when the need is heightened. EIF partners with Feeding Our Kids, an organization that provides sacks of nutritious, non-perishable food for children across Champaign County and Tuscola year-round. Founded in 2013, **Feeding Our Kids now feeds nearly 900 children a week at 33 schools during the school year.** However, summer presents multiple challenges since the program is limited to summer school students. Lori Rogers, a Feeding Our Kids board member, says that last year they distributed 750 bags of food in eight weeks during the summer, creating a significant gap. “We don’t have the same reach as we do during the school year,” she says. School social workers are typically the staff who select the students to participate in the program, as well as recommendations from other staff members. Since knowledge of which students participate in the program is limited to a few staff in each school, the kids who are not in summer school programs do not get bags.

Lori says that even though they face challenges in the summer time, partnering with EIF is very valuable to their organization.

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Hunger doesn't take a summer vacation and **neither do we.**

Visit **eifoodbank.org** for more information on how you can help.

Join us in the fight
against summer hunger.

♥ Fundraise
♥ Advocate

♥ Volunteer
♥ Donate

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Eastern Illinois
Foodbank



THE HIRES REPORT



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We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say 'It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.' **Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes.**

- Fred Rogers

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Dear friends and supporters,

Every day I am privileged to witness what Fred Rogers would call acts of heroism — people who see a need and respond. Foodbanking is built on the premise of shared responsibility. Our mission is to alleviate hunger, and in addition to distributing food, we create opportunities for individuals, businesses, organizations, and communities to volunteer, donate, and advocate around a common cause.

Summer provides unique challenges to our neighbors facing hunger, particularly children. **One in five children in eastern Illinois is at risk for food insecurity.** Families with children who receive free or reduced-cost breakfast and/or lunch at school need to find a way to replace those meals during summer break. They turn to local food pantries and feeding programs who turn to Eastern Illinois Foodbank for support.

In this newsletter, you'll learn how summer hunger affects children and families in our neighborhoods and what we can do collectively to help. "A number of children in our communities rely on free and reduced lunches. **When those children are not in school, their access to food becomes even more limited,**" says Lori Rogers, Feeding Our Kids board member.

Hunger doesn't take a vacation and neither can we. BE A HERO! Join us in taking care of the children in our neighborhood. **Visit our website, eifoodbank.org, or call 217-328-3663 to learn out how you can share responsibility this summer.**

Jim Hires

Jim Hires
President & CEO



URBANA FARM STRIVES TO PROVIDE A **HEALTHY AND HAPPY COMMUNITY**

Sola Gratia Farm is a community-based farm in Urbana that was started in 2012 by St. Matthew Lutheran Church and Faith In Place with the goal of building a food system where high-quality produce is available to everyone, particularly those struggling with food insecurity.

The farm donates ten percent of its produce to local hunger-relief organizations such as Eastern Illinois Foodbank. Additionally, farm shares can be purchased for direct donation to EIF.

"Fresh produce is an essential part of health and wellness and those with limited food dollars are not likely to spend them on a perishable product," said Sola Gratia Farm Director Traci Barkley. "We are grateful to be able to provide fresh produce through Eastern Illinois Foodbank because EIF has incredibly efficient and effective systems in place to serve a broad regional community and does so with heart and compassion."



Rows of produce grown at Sola Gratia Farm

Over the last few years Sola Gratia Farm has expanded their operation from four to twelve acres. They have also expanded their selection of storage crops such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, beets, turnips, and cabbage. **"We are aiming to donate at least another 10,000 pounds of produce to the Foodbank and hopefully more if the season rolls out the way we hope,"** Traci said. They are also taking steps toward expanding year-round production with the goal of providing produce during the winter months as well.

MEET EIF BOARD MEMBER: **TERRI DANIELS**



Terri Daniels' involvement with the Foodbank began when she was packing food boxes at her church knowing she would get one to take home at the end. "Nobody knew that I was struggling at the time," Terri recalls. "When you're worried about feeding your children, it's hard to think about anything else. I planned, I worked hard, yet that's where I found myself — working a job that barely paid the bills with nothing left over to buy food."

Terri met the Foodbank's SNAP Outreach Coordinator, who helped her apply for and receive assistance to augment her monthly food budget. "Never did I ever feel judged by anyone at EIF. They never asked anything of me and instead asked me what else I might need." Terri says the support she received helped her to take steps in building a hope-filled future for her family. "One step led to another and I gained the confidence to apply for a better job, then another. I even went back to school in the hopes of giving back to the organization that helped me and my family on this new path." Terri remembers a time she was able to volunteer with her children. "Being able to stand beside my children and give food to fellow veterans at the pop up pantry for veterans has to be one of my best memories and it gives me joy when I think about it." Terri has since joined the Eastern Illinois Foodbank Board of Directors, in addition to being a mother of two, veteran, master's-degree student and employee of the University of Illinois.

“When you're worried about feeding your children, it's hard to think about anything else.”

11TH ANNUAL PROM BENEFIT RAISES 710,000 MEALS

On March 9, the Hilton Garden Inn was converted into the elite Studio 54 night club as guests arrived in sequins, glitter, jumpsuits, and bell-bottoms to celebrate the Prom Benefit presented by Jackson Chiropractic. Attendees enjoyed dancing, drinks, activities, raffles, a silent auction, and a paddle raise all to raise money for the Eastern Illinois Foodbank.

This year's prom court candidates included members of the community who raised more than \$61,000 to benefit the Eastern Illinois Foodbank. Each dollar raised by a candidate equaled one vote, with Jason Reda and Abbie Osterbur being crowned the Elite Bridal Prom King & Queen.

By the end of the evening, **the event had raised over \$142,000 for the second year in a row, which is the equivalent of 710,000 meals** to help feed those struggling with food insecurity in eastern Illinois.

If you or your business would like to be involved in Prom Benefit 2020, contact our Development department at 217-328-3663 or email marketing@eifoodbank.org.



Prom Court from
left to right:

First row

Jason Reda,
Abbie Osterbur

Second row

Brian Mennenga,
Cathy McArthur,
Chris DeRosa,
Dustin Heuerman,
Lindsey Flessner,
Denise Polindexter,
Amanda Riess

GRANT ENCOURAGES HEALTHY CHOICES

Eastern Illinois Foodbank was recently awarded a grant to increase access to nutritious foods and improve diet quality for those served. The grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield was made available through Feeding America — a nationwide network of foodbanks. EIF, in collaboration with the University of Illinois Extension, received the grant to implement small “nudges” with the intent of encouraging food pantry clients to make healthy food choices.

Five of EIF's partner food pantries are working to apply these small changes at their food distributions. Some examples include using angled shelving to display healthier food options more attractively, putting the more nutritious products at eye level so they are more accessible, creating displays of healthy food bundles, and providing sample healthy recipes. **“The goal is making the convenient choice the healthy choice,”** EIF Partnership Manager Ashlee Salinetto explained. “We want to make the healthy food choices seem less intimidating.”

While the program is a pilot and will last through November, the long-term goal is to create a culture around healthy choices. A 2014 study by Feeding America found that an estimated 33% of pantry households have at least one member that has diabetes, and 57% have a member with high blood pressure. **By encouraging healthier food choices, the hope is that both hunger and health problems can be lessened.**

HUNGER DOESN'T TAKE A SUMMER BREAK

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“The food from the Foodbank saves us money on a number of items typically bought in stores and the staff has been incredibly supportive.”

In addition to the Backpack programs — such as Feeding Our Kids — last summer, school food pantries at Central High School, Arthur Lovington Atwood Hammond High School, Clay City Elementary School, and McKinley Pantry at Garden Hill all served students during summer break. While all the programs are vital, there is still a gap between the number of students who receive summer meals versus the school year.

Having access to nutritious food should not be limited to the school year for the children in our area struggling with hunger. Eastern Illinois Foodbank is dedicated to providing these families with the access they need to healthy meals as well as raising awareness about the summer food gap. All children deserve to go back to school in the fall with the confidence that they have had the nutrients and development necessary to continue learning and growing.

