



Off the Shelf

Summer 2023



Access to and Awareness of Healthy Food for All



Pam Molitoris
Executive Director

Director's Dish

When I was attending graduate school at the University of Illinois, one of our professors shared his thoughts on collaboration. He said that it is difficult to bring people together to effect change, because there are so many different ways of thinking and preferred methodologies. He talked about finding commonalities and working to get everyone on the same page.

I would add this thought - Our best work is done when we embrace the unknown and the possibility of failure, in return for the possibility of great success. From where I sit, this happens when we work as a community and rely on each other's unique strengths and passions.

As we have moved past the pandemic and the crisis it created, we have experienced challenges in supply chain, inflated food prices, increased transportation costs, lack of food donations and a shortage of staff. There is little doubt that these challenges are, at times, daunting, however, they are also the catalyst for change. Like all businesses, for-profit and not-for-profit, we are making adjustments to work within the new normal, looking for opportunities to springboard into a new business model.

This is where the concept of bringing the community together, in a way that makes us all stronger, is helping pave the way. From volunteers who sort and box food, to collaborations between health centers, agricultural partners, schools, businesses and new and existing food pantries, the Foodbank is working to help connect individuals and groups who want our neighbors to have food on their tables.

There is no one size fits all in this work. Yes, there are food safety standards and other guidelines we must adhere to, but where we go as a community is up to us.

We are excited about what the future holds and are committed to ensuring that there is nutritious food on the tables of individuals and families. There is much work to be done and hurdles to overcome, however, we are inspired and encouraged by the efforts of our communities - partners, volunteers, donors - those who choose to engage in making a difference in our communities.

Pam Molitoris

Community Partnerships



Ameriprise Financial volunteers labelling nutritious vegetables for distribution to our neighbors



Neighbors receiving ready to eat meals from Friend in Deed

From Vision to Reality



There are many communities coming together to put food on the tables of our neighbors. Some are doing this through faith-based organizations, others through schools or health centers, or through other community organizations.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Joe and Sarah Engelbrecht saw how great the need was for food support in their community. After helping establish an on-campus food pantry for students at the local high school and volunteering at drive-through distributions, they realized they wanted to do more. Two years later, the **Beardstown Food Pantry** was founded.

The pantry which opened in January, is set up like a grocery store allowing neighbors to choose food based on their food preferences and dietary restrictions. This strategy typically provides higher satisfaction for those visiting the pantry, and less waste. Providing non-traditional hours of distribution, currently each Sunday from 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m., creates greater access to community members, particularly those who work during the week.

Joe and Sarah brought their dream to reality by engaging with businesses and community organizations such as **Cargill**, **Dot Foods**, **JBS**, **Beardstown CUSD #15**, **Cass County Public Health Department**, **University of Illinois Extension office**, and the **Elks Lodge**. The Foodbank provided technical assistance and food safety related resources,

while others helped by spreading the word, sharing best practices, volunteering, donating labor or funds.

Joe Engelbrecht shared that “Cargill was an early partner to the table. **Cargill Cares** was the first supporter giving us \$5,000 for the Tiger pantry housed at the school and then \$10,000 for startup costs at the food pantry and later an additional \$10,000 for equipment.”

DOT Foods, has also been involved since the beginning. Suzy Parn, director of Dot’s Corporate Charitable Program, shared “Dot Foods donated food items for distribution in Beardstown in the past, so when we learned that these citizens were working to create a pantry, we were eager to be a part of their effort. The grant for the pantry’s construction and the food to fill the shelves were two ways we could immediately support them.” Dot Foods has made an ongoing commitment to the pantry noting, “Their efforts are a true example of building their community. We’re honored to help.”

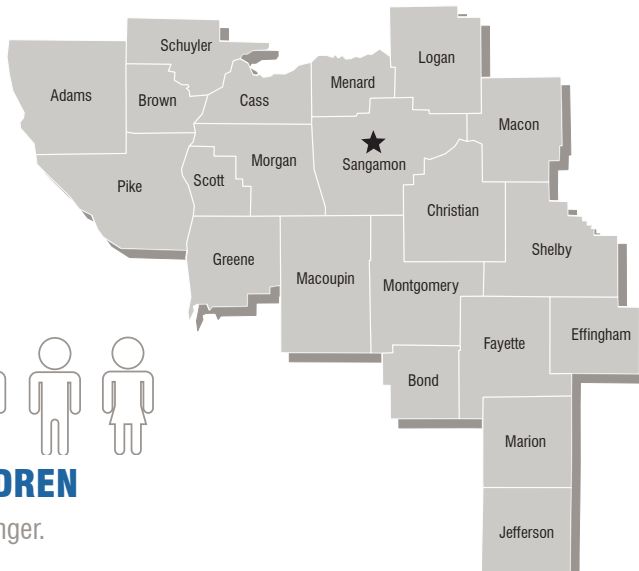
JBS recently presented the Beardstown Food Pantry a gift of \$125,000 to help ensure the success of the newly founded program. Others continue to step up with offers of help. These collaborative efforts demonstrate that when an individual organization involves the entire community, we all win; most importantly, our neighbors who have greater access to food.

IN OUR 21 COUNTY SERVICE AREA



1 IN 6 CHILDREN

struggles with hunger.



NEARLY 100,000 PEOPLE

don't know where their next meal will come from.

LAST YEAR WE DISTRIBUTED



INCLUDING



PROVIDING



We are thankful to HyVee and Feeding America for their efforts to combat food insecurity through the 100 Million Meals* Challenge. #100MMeals From now through September 30th you can help this great cause by rounding up at the register at HyVee, Dollar Fresh Market and Hy-Vee Fast & Fresh locations!

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