



MARYLAND  
FOOD BANK  
UNTIL HUNGER ENDS.

SPRING 2015

# Feeding the Next Generation

GETTING KIDS THE  
NUTRITION THEY NEED

A NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF THE MARYLAND FOOD BANK

IN THIS ISSUE *An After-School Education • Delivering Hope • Expanding the Impact*



# A Personal Note on Hunger

As the weather gets warmer, I find myself thinking of the days my family spent together at my Aunt Lela’s house. She was the only one we knew with a backyard pool and a 10-foot diving board, and her house was our favorite destination for summer family gatherings.

The pool was a major feature at these get-togethers, accompanied by steaks on the grill, corn on the cob, and of course, my Aunt Lela’s famous pudding with bananas and Vanilla Wafers. The worst part of the day was the obligatory 45 minutes we had to wait after eating before getting back in the water. Those were wonderful times, when we felt safe and comforted by our parents’ ability to keep us well fed and deeply loved.

When these memories surface, I can’t help but think about the children among us whose summers go by without such joyful gatherings. There’s no special pudding for them, just the fear that they might have to go another day without three square meals.

It is outrageous, but it’s true. In one of the nation’s wealthiest states, too many kids are facing this struggle, day in and day out. Too many households never have the opportunity to experience the all-American barbecue, abundant and plentiful. Children without memories of gathering around a meal, leaving the table sated and content.

Hunger is a cyclical reality that plagues generations of families in our society, and breaking that pattern requires that we address the roots of the problem: food-insecure children are too often robbed of the opportunity to thrive and, as adults, many of them are forced to endure the same struggles as their parents and their grandparents before them.

It’s time to break the cycle, and we can do that by addressing child hunger now. Food insecurity in today’s generation can and will be reversed if we all decide that hunger is simply unacceptable.

My dear Aunt Lela died several years ago, and every day since then, I have been reminded of her in some way. Some days I can almost taste her banana pudding. Accompanying these memories is the vision of a day in the not-too-distant future when every child in this state can savor memories like these, untouched by food insecurity.

**DEBORAH FLATEMAN** PRESIDENT & CEO



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# Hunger Heats Up as School Winds Down



**W**ith summer fast approaching, child hunger shifts to the forefront here at the Maryland Food Bank.

According to the Maryland State Department of Education, nearly 390,000 children lose access to their school system's Free and Reduced Price Meal Program during the summer, resulting in a critical spike in child hunger. In the next few weeks, these kids will close their lockers for the school year and return to a food-insecure home.

"Summer is one of the toughest times for food-insecure kids and their families," Maryland Food Bank Youth Program Manager Deborah Grant explained. "In addition to finding childcare during the summer months, working parents are forced to stretch an already tight budget to fill in this seasonal meal gap, adding to their financial stress."

In response, the food bank created our Summer Club Program, an integrated solution that targets food-insecure kids at summer childcare centers in low-income communities. The Summer Club Program, along with the Supper Club and School Pantry Programs, make up the MFB Kids initiative, which ensures a steady stream of nutritious food reaches children in need year-round.

"Our Summer Club Program helps fill the meal gap that's left for thousands of kids when the school meal program shuts down," Grant added. "A lot of these kids were relying on their schools for two, sometimes even three, meals a day. It's our job to supplement the school meals they miss during the summer."

The goal of the Summer Club Program is to provide hungry kids with the nutrition they need to thrive during the summer so they can return to school happy, healthy, and ready to learn. In between arts and crafts, sports, and other activities, kids at participating summer clubs receive nutritious breakfasts and lunches delivered straight from our Charles T. Bauer Community Kitchen.



## DID YOU KNOW?

**Nearly 18 million children nationwide lose access to school meals during the summer.**

"Working with fresh produce from our Farm to Food Bank program, our chefs develop nutritious takes on kid-friendly favorites," Grant explained. "By exposing kids to new foods and healthier options, we're able to infuse a nutrition education element into the program."

Last year, the Maryland Food Bank distributed approximately 157,000 nutritious meals to more than 70 summer clubs at YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, and recreation centers across the state.

By providing healthy, homemade meals to children in Summer Clubs, the food bank gives kids the opportunity to be kids during their summer vacation — without having to worry about where their next meal may come from.

**Do you know a childcare center interested in receiving healthy meals from our Summer Club Program?**



**If so, please contact Deborah Grant at (410) 737-8282 ext. 208 to sign up today.**



Students at Landsdowne PAL Center and Boys & Girls Club of Glen Burnie enjoy nutritious food provided by the MFB Supper Club Program.

## An After-School Education

Like so many sites in the Maryland Food Bank's Supper Club Program, a nutritious meal is served to kids around 4:30 p.m. after school each day at the Cockeysville Police Action League (PAL) Center, where at least 100 children spend their afternoon working on homework, playing games, and socializing. But what sets this Supper Club apart from others in the MFB Kids network is that it is one of 20 to receive nutrition education from Maryland Out of School Time (MOST).

"We work with the sites to identify all the things they can build upon in their foundation, like great programming and parental engagement, and help them set goals they can attain within a reasonable timeframe," said MOST's Jessica Conjour.

With support from the food bank and Giant's Our Family Foundation, select Supper Clubs sites at PALs, Boys and Girls Clubs, and the Y of Central Maryland have set individual goals surrounding healthy eating and physical activity, and are using resources and training provided by MOST to achieve them. An education in healthy eating is a vital component of this alliance.

The framework for the program is supported by organizations like the American Heart Association, as well as experts in the fields of health promotion and youth investment. It also focuses on empowering youth to make healthy choices.

"When the kids can take ownership and responsibility in choosing unfamiliar foods, they're much more

interested and invested in eating them," said Conjour.

But it's not just children who are learning new things from the curriculum. "It totally changed my life," said Monica, a leader at one of the Y sites, who learned to drink more water and controls her portion sizes through the MOST program.



*Giant's commitment to kids' health and well-being is reflected in the company's generous support of our MFB Kids initiative, a series of integrated programs that target youth hunger year-round. Thank you Giant!*



### DID YOU KNOW?

In 2014, the Maryland Food Bank distributed nearly **300,000** nutritious meals to food-insecure kids at 55 Supper Club sites across the state.



# Childhood Hunger

## ★ On Paper **AND** in Practice ✨

Childhood hunger is one of the most heart-wrenching realities of our society. In Maryland, one of the wealthiest states in the nation, the idea of a child experiencing hunger pangs is disgraceful.

Today, hunger impacts nearly 260,000 children in the state, or 1 in 5 kids, and this reality is more than just shameful—it has the power to define Maryland’s future for years to come.

Hunger presents obstacles at every level of a child’s life, hampering their health, safety, and academic achievement. For this reason, the Maryland Food Bank is determined to give our food-insecure youth the opportunity to thrive.

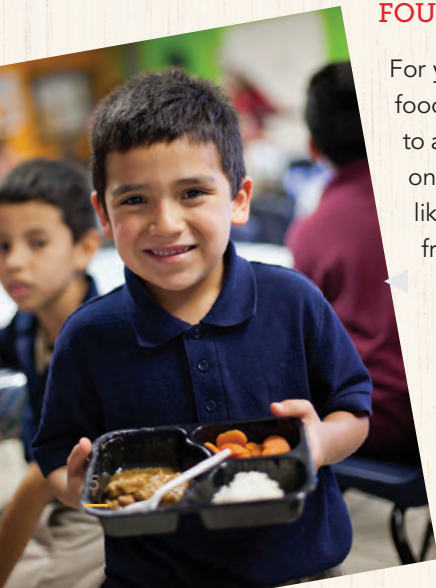
### ESTABLISHING A HEALTHY FOUNDATION

For years, studies have shown that food insecurity is directly connected to a child’s physical well-being. Not only are food-insecure kids more likely to develop chronic conditions, from obesity and diabetes to

high blood pressure and heart disease, but reports also show that hunger can make kids more susceptible to illness.

These conditions are typically a result of poor nutrition, limited access to healthy meal options, and the wide availability of processed and fast foods in food-insecure communities. For decades, these factors have dictated a harmful food culture in low-income neighborhoods, and food-insecure children are often exposed to them without any alternatives.

“The negative consequences of food insecurity on child health begin early in life and continue over time, leading to academic and behavioral problems,” explained pediatric nutrition expert Dr. Maureen Black, professor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine.



“Malnourishment can also have a profound impact on a child’s ability to communicate, think analytically, socialize, and adapt to new environments and people.”

That’s why the Maryland Food Bank developed MFB Kids, an initiative that aims to target food-insecure kids and provide them with nutritious meals on a daily basis. Our School Pantry Program ensures that a steady stream of nutritious food reaches children in need, while our community kitchen works every day to transform fresh produce, lean proteins, and other good foods into kid-friendly meals for our Supper and Summer Clubs Programs.

“The quality of food that’s being served at these summer clubs is so much higher than that of our previous vendors,” said Chief of Recreation Services in Baltimore County Beahta Davis. “And it’s nice to actually see the kids enjoying the food that’s being served.”

### FEEDING HUNGRY MINDS

While most people acknowledge that hunger has a direct impact on a child’s health and physical development, few realize that the effects of hunger go far beyond that—limiting a child’s ability to learn and succeed academically.

Dr. Katherine Alaimo, associate professor at Cornell University, pioneered this correlation in her report on *Food Insufficiency and American School-Aged Children’s Cognitive, Academic, and Psychosocial Development*.

“Six to 11-year-old food-insufficient children had significantly lower arithmetic scores and were more likely to have repeated a grade, have seen a



**“They’ll even tell you outright they’re hungry, and you can see it impacting their learning, their behavior, their attendance.”**

*- Jeanette Gaither*

psychologist, and have had difficulty getting along with other children,” wrote Alaimo.

Our partners in schools across Maryland have echoed these findings, providing firsthand insight into this struggle.

“What happens is they’ll just shut down,” explained Jeanette Gaither, a guidance counselor at Sharp Leadenhall Elementary School near downtown Baltimore. “They’ll even tell you outright they’re hungry, and you can see it impacting their learning, their behavior, their attendance.”

Unfortunately, childhood hunger can leave its imprint later in life as well, limiting career opportunities for those students who struggled in school and perpetuating the cycle of challenges that accompany food insecurity.

But there is hope. Through our School Pantry Program, food pantries are being integrated into schools to break this cycle of poverty and hunger. Today, we partner with 215 schools across the state, ensuring that food-insecure students have immediate access to hunger relief.

The food bank’s presence in schools throughout Maryland is not only aimed at feeding hungry kids—it’s aimed at preserving the opportunities that are presented to children through education.





## ENSURING THE SAFETY OF OUR KIDS

Another hurdle that children in food-insecure communities face is the unstable environment that is bred by hunger and need.

Food insecurity is too often manifested in the upheaval of families and communities as a whole; this, in turn, leads to higher crime rates and a decrease in safety for the most vulnerable members of a community: its kids.

One study published in the *Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics* identified direct links between hunger and risky behaviors in children.

“Problems such as fighting, stealing, and anxiety are more common in hungry, low-income school-age children,” Ronald E. Kleinman, M.D. wrote in his findings, pointing out that these problems are later manifested in society “as increased rates of violence, underachievement, and substance abuse.”

In stressed communities, it can be almost impossible to interrupt this cycle of instability. But through our MFB Kids initiative, the Maryland Food Bank has established safe havens for kids in low-income communities across the state.

“If it wasn’t for this supper club, I don’t know what a lot of these kids would do after school. They’d probably

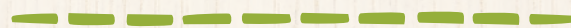


be out in the streets,” said Iris Johnson, a volunteer at the Boys & Girls Club in the town of Bywater. “And a lot of the kids come back and volunteer here as junior staff when they get older. So we’ve got to be doing something right.”

## CREATING A HUNGER-FREE FUTURE

Child hunger in Maryland is the result of a systemic, cyclical issue that stifles the vibrancy of our kids and sentences our communities to generation after generation of struggle. Breaking that cycle requires ending childhood hunger—not just by giving kids food, but by providing them the opportunity to succeed.

“How we address child hunger today will determine the health of our communities decades from now,” said Maryland Food Bank President & CEO Deborah Flateman. “Creating stability and food security for this generation of youth will translate to healthy adults, capable parents—the future leaders of our state.”



**“If it wasn’t for this supper club,  
I don’t know what a lot of these  
kids would do after school.”**

— Iris Johnson



# Delivering Hope

Q&A with MFB Kids Driver Kisha Stevenson



*"I'm delivering to Supper Clubs right now, and I don't know what they would do if they weren't receiving these meals after school," said Kisha, who delivers meals to 31 after-school sites.*

**K**isha Stevenson knows her route by heart. As a driver for the Maryland Food Bank's MFB Kids initiative, she leaves the Baltimore headquarters around noon and makes her last stop at 5 p.m., delivering meals to children in our Supper and Summer Club Programs at 31 sites throughout Anne Arundel, Howard, and Baltimore Counties, as well as Baltimore City.

A single mom of two boys, she holds two jobs to make ends meet. We talked to Kisha, who is also a graduate of our FoodWorks Program, about her work and its impact on hunger in Maryland.

**Q:** Describe your typical day on the job.

**A:** I was offered a job driving after I graduated from FoodWorks in April 2013. Some mornings I work in the kitchen, too, helping to cook the MFB Kids meals I'll deliver; it depends on what's needed. That's the good thing about having the ServSafe certification.

I load my van and drive to the sites, where I talk to some of the directors and take the kids their food. They get a protein, a starch, a vegetable, and a fruit every day. I try not to spend more than three minutes at each site, unless a kid wants to have a conversation. I never brush them off.

**Q:** Right now there are a lot of families in our state struggling to make ends meet. You're a mother; what challenges do you face?

**A:** I have two boys, ages 8 and 14. Because I work two jobs, I spend time with them on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. That's about all the time they get from me now. Being a single parent I have to do what I have to do to keep afloat.

But, they appreciate everything I'm doing, and understand why. The 8-year-old is always saying, "Hey mom, I want to come to work and shadow you. I want to help feed the kids!" He loves doing that; he's big on helping anybody he can.

It's a long workday for me. But I make it look easy, with a smile on my face. I do the best I can.

**Q:** What do you think your job means to the kids you see nearly every day?

**A:** They're between the ages of 5 and 17, and they really love when I come. They say, "Hey, the food lady is here! It's time to eat! Food lady, what do we have today?" They're always very nice and appreciative, even the teenagers, who help out with the meals for the younger ones.

I'm delivering to Supper Clubs right now, and I don't know what they would do if they weren't receiving these meals after school. It might be their last of the day. They depend and rely on this food, and I think we make a huge impact.

# Expanding the Impact

## The School Pantry Program Connects Communities

**N**orth Dorchester Middle School is one of five schools to establish a school pantry through the Maryland Food Bank – Eastern Shore this school year. After hosting two food distribution events, coordinator Marian Hendershot says she feels "powerfully amazed" by the number of people who have offered to volunteer their help.

Sixth-grade teacher Leonard Mueller organized the events. The women who work in the cafeteria set up the food to make the experience more like shopping. Students looked over the list of food available and helped choose what to order, while members of the National Junior Honor Society manned the tables full of goods.

Mirroring the program that began in Central Maryland, this school pantry is one of 27 established on the Eastern Shore since 2012, and it has already left an impression on the community.

Those seeking food assistance "run the gamut" of demographics, says Hendershot, and the school aims to make the environment as comfortable as possible. "There's no shame for our guests. You get in that line, you get one of these [food items], one of these, one of these—no questions asked."

The situation is similar in Western Maryland, where the need for food assistance is high, but so is the number of people willing to lend a hand.

"Unfortunately families here have had a very difficult time due to all kinds of constraints—not having transportation to get places, for instance," Billie Bedregal, volunteer and youth programs coordinator at the MFB – Western Branch. "So, having the pantry right in the school makes it convenient for families to get food."

There are now 24 pantries operating between Frederick County and Washington County, the same region where the School Pantry Program operated by the MFB – Western Branch began with four schools in 2012.

Over at Antietam Academy in Hagerstown, coordinator Mercedes Johnson calls the school's storage room a "grocery store" instead of a food pantry. "It's become part of our day and our schedule," she said, with designated times for middle and high school students to visit. Parents can

come in on an appointment basis, attend a family night, or ask for emergency assistance if needed.

"I've heard stories from those who, because of the pantry, could pay their electric bill, or get their car fixed," said Bedregal. "They say, 'I was left with nothing, and now I at least have something.'"



### DID YOU KNOW?

**This spring, Giant funding enabled us to provide freezers to 21 schools across the state, building their capacity to store and distribute frozen meats.**



For more information on establishing or supporting a school pantry in your community, contact Deborah Grant at (410) 737-8282 ext. 208.



Since May 2014, Nymeo Federal Credit Union has supported our school pantries in Frederick County through donations of both time and money.

# Right on Target



The Maryland Food Bank’s partnership with Target was a natural fit. In direct alignment with the food bank’s philosophy, Target’s Meals for Minds program addresses the impact hunger has on a child’s health and academic achievement and it seeks to give kids the chance to succeed, unfettered by food insecurity.

Since 2012, Target has made generous investments for food distribution to two low-income Baltimore City schools.

Every month, Target’s Meals for Minds program sends approximately 25,000 pounds of food to Walter P. Carter Elementary/Middle School and Highlandtown Elementary/Middle School, providing students and their families a generous supply of high-quality foods—and welcome relief from the threat of hunger.

Target, you’ve hit the right mark. Your support is truly changing lives and strengthening school communities.

# Beyond the Books



As part of The Harry and Jeannette Weinberg Foundation’s Library Project, an initiative that focuses on renovating libraries in high-poverty Baltimore City Public Schools, the foundation supports the Maryland Food Bank’s School Pantry Program by encouraging every school they renovate to host a pantry.

“We recognize that it takes more than a pretty space to impact the life of a student,” said Kate Soresstad, Program Officer for the Weinberg Foundation’s Library Project.

“We know, from more than 60 national studies, that a well-equipped, well-staffed, and well-resourced library can override the impact poverty has on a child’s academics. But food is a critical piece of this puzzle, and the Maryland Food Bank is helping us ensure our students are successful.”

The Library Project also works with the food bank to fund food each week for up to 75 students attending these schools, resulting in a partnership that has become a staple of the Library Project and another example of how the Weinberg Foundation supports our efforts year in and year out.

**The Maryland Food Bank distributed nearly 2.3 million meals to school pantries last year, thanks to support from the following donors:**



Additional funding is provided by the following:

- Wheeler Foundation
- Hittman Family Foundation
- Sinsky-Kresser-Racusin Memorial Foundation



The Spring Forward Food Drive engages Marylanders of all ages in an effort to spread awareness and provide food to our hungry neighbors.

## Marylanders Spring Forward for Hunger Relief



PRESENTED BY HARVEST FOR THE HUNGRY

In early March, the Maryland Food Bank teamed up with AARP, the Girl Scouts of Central Maryland, Safeway, WBAL-TV 11 and the U.S. Postal Service to once again host the Spring Forward Food Drive Presented by Harvest for the Hungry.

From Saturday, February 28 through Sunday, March 8, Marylanders were encouraged to donate \$10 pre-packaged bags of food at Safeway stores across the state and drop off nonperishable food items at their local post offices. Canned goods were also collected at Central Maryland Buick/GMC dealerships, while individuals in Hagerstown, Salisbury, and Southern Maryland were invited to help "Stuff-a-Bus" at various locations. Additionally, donations were collected through the Maryland Food Bank's virtual food drive.

Throughout the week, AARP volunteers and local Girl Scouts were out and about at Safeway stores across the region, encouraging customers to contribute to the cause. The effort was so successful that Safeway graciously offered to extend the drive an additional week, through March 15.

By the end of the event, more than 13,000 bags of food were donated, resulting in a 175% increase over the previous year. In addition, more than 11,000 pounds of food was collected through the combined efforts of our various partners, while \$9,000 was raised by Anderson Automotive and the virtual food drive.

The Spring Forward Food Drive was the brainchild of the late anti-hunger advocate Larry Adam, who in 1987 founded Harvest for the Hungry to bring attention to Maryland's food-insecure population. This particular event was one of Larry's favorite drives because of the time of year it takes place—after the holidays, when hunger is no longer in the spotlight yet the food bank is in need of community support to help replenish our shelves.

*A big thank you goes out to all who participated and made this year's Spring Forward Food Drive such a phenomenal success!*

### MARYLAND FOOD BANK BY THE NUMBERS



130+ Staff

+



3 branch locations

+



1,250 distribution partners

+



11,000 volunteers

+



34,000+ donors

=



nearly 37 million meals

**Thank you for being part of the movement to end hunger in Maryland!**

[www.mdfoodbank.org](http://www.mdfoodbank.org)

