



# YEAR TWO HIGHLIGHTS

September 2017

## From the Chair

Hunger-Free Lancaster County, comprised of more than 30 local and regional organizations, is committed to one mission: building a hunger-free Lancaster County by creating a nutritious, accessible, and sustainable food system. Our goal, established in 2015, is to ensure that every Lancastrian has access to three healthy meals a day by 2018.

Today, our coalition is eager to share highlights from our second extraordinary year.

An improving economy has given our audacious task a welcome “tail wind;” this year, there are slightly fewer of us living with food insecurity than when we launched. There are now 53,500 food insecure individuals in Lancaster County, down from 55,000. While an improvement, this is still an unacceptably high 10% of our county population.

Even more troubling, today, 19,960, or almost 16% percent, of Lancaster County children regularly experience hunger or worry about where their next meal is coming from. So, while things may have gotten a little better for some of us, nobody I know thinks it’s ok for almost 20,000 kids to be struggling with hunger.

Clearly we still have LOTS of work to do.

To achieve our goal, currently we are focused on eliminating the “meal gap” in our beautiful and abundant county. We continue to partner with people and organizations that care and can help - businesses, faith-based organizations, schools, hospitals, non-profits and public entities. We are not creating another social services agency but rather an organized and energized county-wide movement in which important connections are made, resources are gathered and shared, and problem-solving happens.

Our coalition is an integral part of “Setting the Table: A Blueprint for a Hunger-Free PA,” an ambitious, multi-agency initiative of Pennsylvania governor Tom Wolf to provide access to healthy food for all Pennsylvanians. Similarly, we spearhead the food security portion of Lancaster’s Commission to Combat Poverty, an innovative strategic plan to cut poverty in half in the City by 2032.

If I had to distill the coalition’s most significant accomplishment of 2017, it would be the increase in and heightened attention to providing fresh produce and protein-rich meals to food insecure families throughout Lancaster County. Research shows that people with lower incomes are less likely to purchase and eat fresh produce; it can be more expensive and harder to access in some communities. Hunger-Free Lancaster County has worked tirelessly to overcome the challenges of perishability, access, and seasonality. We are happy to report that in Lancaster County’s food assistance network, nutritious food is now the norm instead of the exception!

Please continue to help make Lancaster a place where everyone has access to three nutritious meals every day.

Proudly,

Mike Brubaker  
Chair, Hunger-Free Lancaster County  
Former Pennsylvania State Senator  
President and CEO, Blackford Ventures, LLC  
Founder, Pennsylvania Legislative Hunger Caucus



## Coalition Partners

### Business

American Dairy Association North East  
Blackford Ventures, LLC

### Nonprofit/Social Services

AARP Foundation  
Boys & Girls Club of Lancaster  
Central Pennsylvania Food Bank  
Community Action Partnership of Lancaster County  
Gap Family Resource and Counseling Center  
Hands Across the Street  
Hunters Sharing the Harvest  
Lancaster County Coalition to End Homelessness  
Lancaster General Health/Lighten Up Lancaster  
Lancaster Recreation Commission  
Meals on Wheels of Lancaster  
PowerPacks Project  
Spanish American Civic Association (SACA)  
United Way of Lancaster County  
Wellspan Ephrata Community Hospital

### Education

Penn State Extension Nutrition Links  
Pennsylvania College of Art & Design  
Pennsylvania State Education Association  
School District of Lancaster

### Government

City of Lancaster  
IU-13 Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit  
Lancaster County Behavioral Health & Developmental Services  
Pennsylvania Department of Education  
Pennsylvania Department of Human Services

### Faith-Based

Church World Service  
Lancaster County Council of Churches  
Lutheran Camping Corporation of Central Pennsylvania  
Salvation Army of Lancaster County  
Zion Lutheran Church

### Media

Engle Printing and Publishing Co., Inc.  
Lancaster Farming  
LNP Media Group, Inc.



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## FRESH, FRESH, FRESH

Food security means much more than full stomachs. Everyone deserves access to three nutritious meals a day. After all, healthy families build healthy communities.

Hunger-Free Lancaster County provides a much-needed nexus of coordination, facilitating a sharper focus not just on closing the “meal gap,” but also on the nutritional value of the meals we provide - at home, in the community, and at school.

More healthy food sharing also means busier Pennsylvania farms, healthier lives, and a lot less food waste - a triple win by anyone’s count!



“My faith, my commitment to feeding hungry neighbors, and my personal farming background called me to this work,” said Pastor Matt Lenahan of the Zion Lutheran Church in Akron, a Hunger-Free Lancaster coalition member. Working on the Wittel Farm in Elizabethtown, a 40-acre property owned by the Lutheran Camping Corporation, Pastor Matt and Mike Youse launched The Wittel Farm Growing Project in 2016.

In the project’s first growing season, 130 volunteers harvested about 5,500 pounds of produce. This year, the project increased acreage from two to five and hosted more than 250 volunteers. Through September, Pastor Matt says the group has donated 7,200 pounds of produce to eight area food pantries, with more to come through the end of harvest season. With the addition of deer management activities, the farm also expects to contribute 500 pounds of healthy, lean venison this fall.

With a goal to farm nine acres in 2018 and have 20 acres under cultivation by 2020, Pastor Matt notes that The Growing Project at Wittel Farm will be part of Lancaster’s Extraordinary Give in 2017, and is looking for additional funding to add much-needed equipment, such as a tractor.

Many thanks go out to The Wittel Farm Growing Project’s valued partners, including Seedway, Miller’s Greenhouse, Michael Zimmerman, and Rob Kaufhold, whose generosity makes this project possible. Thanks, too, to area churches for their donations that now exceed \$8,000, money spent to purchase planting supplies, tilling equipment, and other essential supplies.



## Healthy Food Sharing Initiatives:

### **RECORD AMOUNTS OF FREE PRODUCE DISTRIBUTED BY COUNTY FOOD PANTRIES**

This year, a record 20% of the food distributed by Lancaster's food pantries consisted of fruits and vegetables – 1.3 million pounds! Families in need throughout the county are happily substituting tasty and nutritious produce for less healthy, non-perishable food items.

### **MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL COOPERATIVE (MARC)**

In the coming winter, Lancaster County's food pantries and community meal programs will begin receiving additional quantities of fresh produce as part of a newly-launched and innovative purchasing cooperative. The MARC, a cooperative of 24 Feeding America Food Banks, including our partner Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, will increase the quantity, quality and variety of produce available for member food pantries to share in their communities.

The MARC recently began operations in the Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market, purchasing deeply-discounted, but wholesome surplus produce that is then efficiently shared with those in need. This much-needed supply of fresh vegetables and fruits includes zucchini, squash varieties, corn, grape varieties, potatoes, sweet potatoes, cucumbers, bananas, carrots, collards, kale, lettuce, parsnips, peppers, citrus fruits, melon varieties, tropical fruits and much more, with availability throughout the year.

### **NEW CORNER STORE & BODEGA GUIDELINES**

On January 17, 2018, retail stores accepting SNAP [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program] vouchers will be required to offer a larger inventory and variety of healthy food options, stocking an additional 74 products on top of the 12 that are currently mandated. To help store owners get ready, Hunger-Free Lancaster County partner Lancaster General Health/Penn Medicine and its obesity-fighting Lighten Up Lancaster coalition has begun educating local corner store owners about these new regulations.

### **SCHOOL GARDENS**

The School District of Lancaster is showing up its country cousins by supporting a garden in each of its schools! School gardens help kids learn about nutrition and healthy lifestyle choices while providing hands-on experiences for students and families to improve their attitudes toward cooking and eating healthy fresh fruits and vegetables. Students, parents, faculty and staff tend these urban patches, and the produce grown is eaten at school, sent home with students, or donated. Local nutrition educators devise lessons and taste tests around the pick of the day – something students of all ages seem to love! Hunger-Free Lancaster County partner Lancaster General Health/Penn Medicine offers a comprehensive garden toolkit on its Lighten Up Lancaster website, as well as links to many helpful sites and experts. This past summer they also gave away six raised-bed starter kits to help launch more school and community gardens – the kits included lumber, hardware and soil for two raised beds, 100-foot hose, hose nozzle, watering cans, buckets, shovels, trowels and gloves, too!

### **COMMUNITY MEALS**

With the hard work of many Hunger-Free Lancaster County partners, the free weekend community meals in Lancaster City were re-started. With the increasing awareness of the importance of meals prepared up to the highest sanitary standards, Hunger-Free Lancaster County and its many partners looked for new ways to feed those in need in Lancaster City on the weekends. The Spanish American Civic Association (SACA) and the Salvation Army of Lancaster, with their beautiful facilities and convenient locations, willingly volunteered and this summer, the City's Saturday and Sunday night free meals were back up and running.

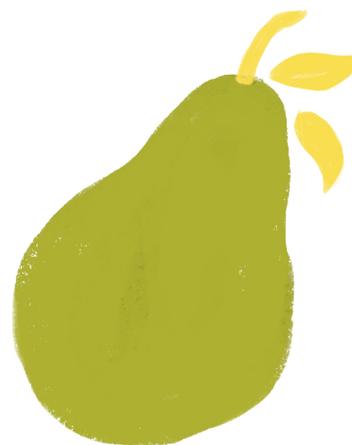
Earlier this year, Nancy Kindler burst into tears after being told by agency personnel that she and her family no longer qualified for WIC benefits [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children].

"I wasn't crying because I was upset," said Mrs. Kindler. Hers were tears of joy as she realized that her young family had finally made it to self-sufficiency!

"I went to the WIC counselor at Community Action Partnership of Lancaster County right after my husband, Andrew, got a job," she recounted. "He had just finished his bachelor's degree, and we were so excited that we had done it - gotten through a pretty scary time and accomplished our goal of keeping our family healthy and together!"

Nancy Kindler says that her husband, who served in the U.S. Air Force for six years and is currently a member of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard, would not have been able to complete his bachelor's degree if it weren't for WIC. One of her children had a food sensitivity and needed expensive formula as an infant. The benefits WIC provided the family allowed her husband to continue on in school to complete his studies and get a family-sustaining job.

Today, the Kindlers live in Lititz with their children Jade and Skye, ages 3 and 2, respectively. They are proud "graduates" of the WIC program!



### **BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS**

In many if not most places in the United States, there is enough food to feed everyone. Yet hunger persists, including in places like Lancaster, which has more than 53,500 residents living with hunger but is simultaneously the most philanthropic county in the country and one of the nation's most productive farming communities. Mostly this disconnect occurs because there are barriers to access, often unintended.



### **SO THE QUESTION IS:**

How can the available healthy food be efficiently matched to those in need?

Hunger-Free Lancaster County was created to identify the barriers to access to healthy meals and coordinate sustainable solutions to overcome them.





# Barrier-Breaking Solutions:

## **FEED YOUR SOUL CAMPAIGN**

In an effort to de-stigmatize and encourage the use of federally-funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) dollars to buy healthy food, Hunger-Free Lancaster County approached the Pennsylvania College of Art & Design to create a visual public awareness campaign. During its Designathon 2017, three talented art students -- Austin Lord, Casey Capece, Alicia Brooks -- and one outstanding alumna -- Lisa DeAngelo -- created a suite of materials for which Hunger-Free Lancaster County would have spent months and tens of thousands of dollars acquiring from a professional firm. With the tag line "Feed Your Body, Fuel Your Soul, Free Your Mind" and accompanying hand-drawn illustrations that you see on this report, the campaign captured perfectly why food security is so critical to a free and productive society: without it, we are not healthy, our families are not secure, we can't have the peace of mind needed to be productive, and we cannot flourish as individuals or a society. Hunger-Free Lancaster County cannot thank the Pennsylvania College of Art & Design and its faculty, administration, students, and alumni enough for this lasting contribution! You can see this campaign on bus stops in New Holland, Ephrata, Columbia and Pequea Valley.

## **BUILDING BRIDGES WITH DOCTORS**

This year, Community Action Partnership of Lancaster hired its first nurse specifically for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and deployed her to build relationships with Lancaster healthcare providers, educating them on nutrition assistance programs and encouraging them to routinely talk about diet and nutrition. Lancaster General Health regularly screens all patients for food security and refers them to local food programs as needed.

## **SUMMER MEALS FOR KIDS**

For the one in eight Lancaster County children who come from food insecure families, summertime often means the return of hunger pangs. Summer meal programs have become a vital way to help. Program sponsors such as PowerPacks Program, Lancaster Rec, Community Action Partnership of Lancaster, Boys and Girls Club of Lancaster, the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, and others distribute thousands of healthy meals around the county for ten weeks each summer. Sometimes combined with summer camps, sometimes just drop-in centers within walking distance, summer programs provided about 106,000 meals in the summer of 2016.

## **SCHOOL MEALS**

This year, Hunger-Free Lancaster county moved the needle by partnering with many more school districts and administrators to serve breakfast "After the Bell." With the #BreakfastMakesSchoolBetter slogan and help from First Lady Frances Wolf and others, a groundswell of support was created for these programs. Thanks to our school district partners, more students are getting a nutritious breakfast at school than ever before.

## **AFTER SCHOOL MEALS**

Food insecurity doesn't end with the last school bell of the day! Our coalition team has worked with the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank to add nine new opportunities across Lancaster County for students to receive free healthy dinners during after school programming.

## **WHY WIC MATTERS**

The coalition continues to find ways to encourage pregnant women and women with young children to apply for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) if they are eligible. The assistance can mean the difference between a starchy, salty diet for kids and one with healthier, fresher and more varied food. This year, Community Action Partnership of Lancaster County and Lancaster General Health/Penn Medicine developed a Farmers Market Nutrition Program Guide to increase the use of fruit and vegetable vouchers. These guides were handed out at WIC appointments over the summer. CAP's WIC on Wheels mobile clinic nearly doubled the number of participants it was able to see throughout the County to almost 500.



# GETTING BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

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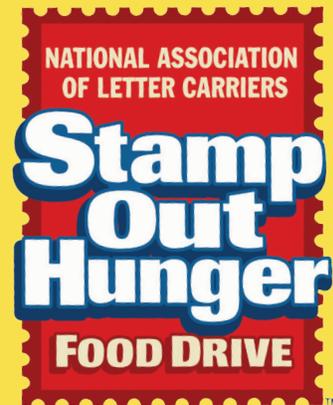
## PENNSYLVANIA GOVERNOR TOM WOLF AND FIRST LADY FRANCES WOLF

The Governor and First Lady wrote a heartfelt letter to School District of Lancaster Superintendent Dr. Damaris Rau, encouraging her to support universal "Breakfast after the Bell" throughout the district. And First Lady Frances Wolf visited Columbia High School during "School Breakfast Week" in May in an effort to increase student participation in the district's breakfast program. She visited with students as they arrived for breakfast and talked about the need for expanded access to school breakfast programs to help students across Pennsylvania have the start to the day that they need to be successful. The Wolfs' concern about child hunger and the impact it has on learning is genuine and their support for our mission is much appreciated!



## BLACKFORD VENTURES AND HUNTERS SHARING THE HARVEST

Hunger-Free Lancaster County chair Mike Brubaker's company, Blackford Ventures, LLC, underwrote this year's venison collection, which yielded more than 13,000 pounds of lean and nutritious venison that was donated to Lancaster food pantries -- enough for 33,000 meals! The firm made the donation in recognition of the 25th anniversary of this unique statewide non-profit charity that coordinates the processing and distribution of donated wild game to Pennsylvanians in need.



## STAMP OUT HUNGER

Hunger-Free Lancaster County partnered with the National Association of Letter Carriers' for the 25th annual #StampOutHunger Food Drive on Saturday, May 13. Thousands of Lancastrians participated, raising more than 7,700 pounds of food in the City of Lancaster alone!



To improve the health and wellbeing of families in need, Hunger-Free Lancaster County and its partners are asking Lancaster food drive organizers to get the word out that food drives need nutritious foods like:

CANNED TUNA

CANNED CHICKEN

CANNED FRUIT IN 100% JUICE

CANNED LOW-SODIUM VEGETABLES

BROWN RICE

WHOLE GRAIN PASTA

CANNED LOW-SODIUM BEANS

DRIED BEANS

NON-HYDROGENATED NUT BUTTER

LOW-SODIUM SOUP



### HOW YOU CAN HELP

Together with Lancaster General Health and Lighten Up Lancaster, Hunger-Free Lancaster County has developed a much-needed toolkit for people wanting to organize food drives. One in every seven Americans rely on a food pantry to stretch their monthly budgets and often make other sacrifices to get by, including buying inexpensive junk food and avoiding healthcare, which can lead to diet-related health problems like diabetes. But unfortunately, food pantries receive some pretty unhealthy food donations, such as high-sodium soups, chips, and soda. They tend to keep donated food items, not wanting to turn food away, “waste” free food, or alienate enthusiastic donors. Donors also tend to give lots of almost-expired non-perishable foods when responding to food drive requests.



**READ MORE + DOWNLOAD THE FREE HEALTHY FOOD DRIVE TOOLKIT:**  
<http://www.hungerfreelancaster.org/get-involved/healthy-food-drive>

