



Hunger-Free LANCASTER COUNTY

YEAR FOUR REPORT TO OUR COMMUNITY





November 2019

From the Chair

In the year since we announced our transformation to a support organization for the most impactful social services hubs in Lancaster County and strengthened our voice for better public policy to ensure access to healthy meals for struggling Lancasterians, it has been obvious we made the right call.

The hubs continue to do what they do best: effectively engage in community-based poverty elimination and health improvement strategies that work, including providing nutritious meals to families in need. The hub teams are the front lines in Lancaster County's fight against hunger and poverty.

Our partners in public service have made outstanding efforts to build support for better policy to make Lancaster County a welcoming and thriving place to live, work, play and learn. Together, we are working effectively to make sure our neighbors in need can participate in this success and share in its bounty.

This annual report to our community shares highlights of the many accomplishments of our expanded coalition toward ensuring sustainable access to three healthy meals a day for all Lancasterians.

Thank you so much for your help in this vital work, and if you would like to be more involved, please visit our engaging website at hungerfreelancaster.org or reach out to any one of our members. We are proud of our accomplishments, but much work remains.

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



Lancaster County's Hubs:

Improving Lives by Working Together

To better support the highly impactful work being done directly with Lancastrians in need, Hunger-Free Lancaster County now supports seven social services Hubs located throughout the county. Started by the "collective impact" model unveiled by the **United Way of Lancaster County** several years ago, the hubs were organized as a way to better and more efficiently leverage community resources.

Here are some highlights in Hub innovation from the past year:

In August, the **Community Action Partnership of Lancaster County (CAP)** was singled out for the 2018 Gold Level Loving Support Award of Excellence for its work promoting and supporting breast feeding through peer counseling programs. This prestigious, national prize was given to only 78 agencies; CAP is the only Pennsylvania agency and only one of two agencies within USDA's Mid-Atlantic Region (PA, Virginia, West Virginia, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Washington DC, US Virgin Island and Puerto Rico) to be selected.

This year has been an exciting time in the life of the former Lancaster County Council of Churches which officially launched a new name in May: **Lancaster County Food Hub - Serving with Faith and Compassion**, chosen to make it easier for those in need to know where to go for help and reflect its commitment to being a key resource for the food insecure.

The city-based Food Hub reports that the demand for food continues to rise and is on track this year to exceed 33,000 people served, more than 1,000 people more than in 2018. The Food Hub has also become the host site for a new Food Pharmacy Pilot project lead by Lancaster General Hospital. With a premise that "food is medicine," this initiative is a natural partnership with the Food Hub's "fresh and healthy" focus.

SERVING
WITH *Faith +*
Compassion



It's been a busy year for the **Elizabethtown Community Housing and Outreach Services (ECHOS)**. Its community cupboard serves an average of 140 households per month, with 30 of those having special dietary restrictions. It now provides emergency food boxes to clients who show up to the pantry without an appointment, are from out of town, or are clients moving into the Hub's crisis housing apartments.

Hard at work to become a certified "healthy pantry," the ECHOS Hub now promotes healthier food options such as low sodium and whole grain items, and provides clients with tips on how to make healthier meals. In season, the Growing Project at Wittel Farm provides fresh produce to supplement the Hub's wholesome offerings.

The Hub has made a priority of developing strategic partners, including:

- The Northwest EMS and Lancaster EMS, who provide health and safety trainings on site and promote healthier eating options at their events.
- The local Kiwanis Club, which is supporting a supplemental, pantry-based program offering healthy snacks for children.

Next year, working with the Penn State College of Medicine, the ECHOS Hub hopes to offer clients with special dietary needs the opportunity to have their own garden plot and provide them with instruction and support for gardening and how to use the food they grow.

The **Solanco Family Life Network** and its Neighborhood Ministries in Quarryville also sees the value in partnership; it now shares a caseworker with **The Factory Ministries** in nearby Paradise, who meets with Solanco's clients one day each week to help them identify and plan for their long-term goals. This is hoped to be a step towards more shared services, including an outreach advocate and surveys of the crisis case management need in the area.



Up in the northern part of the county, **Ephrata Area Social Services** has begun a bus route, a scheduled public transportation resource providing transportation between its two sites - the newly opened Declaration House and the Community Commons at the Ephrata Public Library. This allows the Hub's clients to take full advantage of programs and services at both sites, which include food and clothing banks.

Lancaster Pastor Lives His Faith Through Farming



Raised in upstate New York, Lenahan's father was a vegetable farmer, but young Matt knew he didn't want to devote his life to farming. Lenahan chose to pursue a call to ministry, attending Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg.

Today he combines farming and faith.

Lenahan is pastor at Zion Lutheran in Akron, a founder and board member of Hunger-Free Lancaster. He also is founder of The Growing Project at Wittel Farm, a collaborative effort of the faith community and area non-profits with a goal of ending hunger in a systemic way.

"Our goal is fresh healthy food grown by the community for food-insecure neighbors," said Lenahan, taking a break from clearing tomato vines on a steamy September morning.

On most Wednesdays from April to November you will probably find Lenahan behind the wheel of a New Holland tractor tending the crops at the Wittel Farm in Elizabethtown.

On this morning Lenahan and volunteer Christina Smoker were pulling up rows of thick tomato vines. "It was not a great year for tomatoes," said Lenahan, explaining they lost many plants to tomato blight disease. But there were thousands of pounds of other vegetables to harvest in service to the community.

Food grown on the farm is cultivated by volunteers and distributed through network of food relief groups in Lancaster.

The 85-acre farm was bequeathed to the Lutheran Camping Corporation of Central Pennsylvania 35 years ago by parishioners, Chuck and Katie Wittel as a site for spiritual renewal.



Few ministers would look as comfortable in the seat of a tractor as they do at the pulpit. But not Pastor Matt Lenahan. Farming is in his blood.





It was Lenahan though five years ago who wondered why they were leasing the tillable land to a hay farmer when it could serve a human purpose. They started small, with one acre of crops. "It's been a learning experience," said Lenahan. "The corn was decimated by deer the first year." So they installed a 9-foot deer fence.

With no shortage of volunteers, their numbers are growing (some 400 at last count) and the yield, which started with 5,000 pounds of food on that single acre, has grown to eight acres and 40 to 50,000 pounds of corn, tomatoes, squash and green beans. Working with partners such as the **Council of Churches**, **FFA** and **PennMedicine** ensures there are both enough volunteers and places that county residents can pick up food. "No one should be hungry in downtown Lancaster," said Lenahan.

"We want to be mindful, ecologically."

Wittel Farm is not solely about producing vegetables; Lenahan's vision is bigger than just growing food. "The ecological challenges we're facing require us to farm in a particular way," he said. "We try to be low impact and more sustainable. It's a reconnection of people with the land and farming." Lenahan shows a visitor the farm's small butterfly garden filled with butterfly-attracting native plants like milkweed and hyssop that brought in monarch butterflies this season. "We need to create enough of a habitat to provide cover for caterpillars," said Lenahan, the wheels in his head turning on next year's to-do list. "We plant alongside food products there's a symbiosis of pollination," said Lenahan, adding there are eight beehives humming along at the farm too. "We want to be mindful, ecologically."

In a video produced for Hunger Free Lancaster Lenahan discusses the action-reflection model of Lutheran Theological Seminary. "It's through the abundance of the Creator we become fully human when engaged in the act of creation," he said. "You don't have to go across the world - do it here."

Smoker is one of the busiest volunteers, coming every Wednesday during the season, often with her three children who are 13, 11 and 10 years old. She said what started as a chore for her kids ("It's hot! I'm tired!") turned into, "When are we going to Wittel?" "We try to make it fun, like running tomatoes to the box," said Smoker. "Now it's Wittel Wednesdays in our house." She said her children now find value in the work. "They understand where food comes from," she said. "This was what we hoped for, part of our lives." For Smoker, being close to the land, getting her hands dirty and inhaling the rich aroma of tomato plants is a religious experience. "It's where I feel closest to God," she said. "This is the wonder of it all."

Lenahan's wife Cheri and his children, Jonah, Luke, and Eli, are among his small army of volunteers who tend to the vegetables in the field. This fall volunteers were still harvesting crops into October, but Lenahan is already planning for next year. He said his goal of farming on 20 acres by 2020 is probably a little ambitious. "We will make it to 12-15 acres," he said reflecting on the bout of plant disease and weather conditions that hurt the yield this season. Lenahan said the volume of produce might have been down this year but what was lost in yield the project made up for in human growth. "Maybe we didn't get as much food, but we built connections with the community," said Lenahan, as he looked toward more volunteers coming in to harvest pumpkins and squash later in the fall.

He said he'd like to expand the learning and education possibilities to include more farming and environmental education with school groups. "I love it when people come to the farm and have no experience - the closest is stopping at the farmer's market," said Lenahan. "When they volunteer it gives them the opportunity to plant, grow and harvest food, clean up and prep for next year. It gives them a sense of the rhythm of it all."



Hunger-Free Lancaster County Action Team Takes on Meal Mapping

When Dan Siewert and Kim Sullenberger are done, Lancastrians in need will have up to date information on the nearest healthy meal. They also hope the data, which will be collected in a variety of ways, will give Hunger-Free Lancaster County and its members the information needed to make sure that everyone in Lancaster is able to access a healthy meal.

Siewert, VP of Community Ministries, Water Street Mission, and Sullenberger, Health and Nutrition Impact Team Leader, Community Action Partnership of Lancaster, are the co-chairs of the Food Sourcing and Sharing Action Team of Hunger-Free Lancaster County. Other members of that action team include representatives from:

- » **Lancaster County Food Hub**
- » **PA 211 Lancaster County**
- » **Lancaster General Health/Penn Medicine**
- » **Meals on Wheels Lancaster County**
- » **Power Packs Project**
- » **Lancaster Rec**
- » **Millersville University**
- » **PA National Guard State Family Program Branch**
- » **Central Pennsylvania Food Bank**
- » **Crossnet Ministries**

Currently, **Pennsylvania 2-1-1 East**, part of a free, statewide service for finding health and human services offered by the United Way of Pennsylvania, collects information about meals and food resources and distributes it online and via a 24-hour telephone service.

Their plan, says Siewert and Sullenberger, is to continue using PA 211 as the primary way to communicate food resources. The work being done by the HFLC action team should ensure that accurate information on all food resources is readily available and that the needs of all communities in the county are met.



Continues to Grow and Innovate

It's easy to classify the **Power Packs Project** as the "backpack program." But it is so much more.

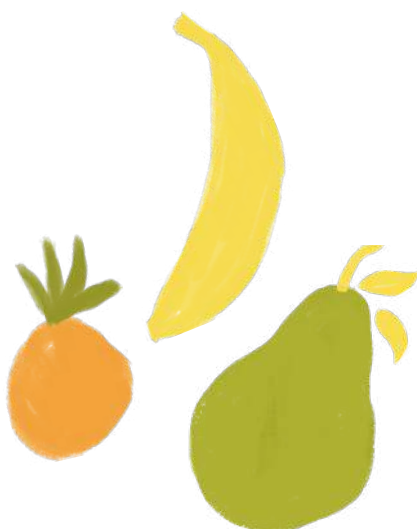
With a mission to empower families with education and ingredients to create nutritious weekend meals, so their children return to school fed and ready to learn, Power Packs is now in 45 schools in 13 districts in Lancaster County and three school districts in Lebanon County, providing 34,103 nutritious meals to 6,400 families a month.

At the same time, the Lancaster-based organization is focusing on the education side of its mission, working to instill lifelong healthy eating habits and teach cooking and food safety skills.

A few of the new initiatives at Power Packs include its innovative study on how children

learn about nutrition and cooking. Working with Lancaster Rec and tapping retired seniors to help with the children in classroom settings from Pre-K to Kindergarten, Power Packs is building an intergenerational model and the data to support it.

Power Packs has also partnered with Georgetown University for a 24-month study of its own services, working in the school districts of Lancaster and Lebanon and with a newly designed app allowing real time information to be gathered with a follow up text survey to participating families. Most backpack programs focus on emergency food for children when school is not in session.



Over 15 years, **Power Packs Project** has grown its focus to include healthy meals for the entire family and empowering families to learn about nutrition and meal preparation with the larger goal of having children return to school on Mondays fed and ready to learn and thrive.

The Georgetown study will examine the benefits of the Power Packs Project for the student and their families, who is participating and why, how the families use the program, and how the program could be strengthened.



Better Access, Better Food, Better Together

The Central Pennsylvania Food Bank and its partners share what it call a “Bold Goal” to make sure everyone has a seat at the table. More formally, by 2025 the collaborative network will provide access to enough nutritious food for everyone struggling with hunger in each of the 27 counties it serves, and will convene and nurture partnerships to make progress toward ending hunger.

Last year, to make progress towards this goal, the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank embraced the role of lead organization in a grant-funded deep assessment of charitable food access in York County – **“A Seat at the Table: Evaluating the Charitable Food System in York County, PA,”** the report highlighted in the article below and on the next page.

With the insights from the Seat at the Table report, the food bank has elevated attention to what works best for its neighbors struggling with hunger. The report also highlighted that collaboration with food bank partners and network sustainability are vital to the mission.

Working under the construct **“Better Access, Better Food, Better Together,”** the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank and its Partners are embracing practices that ensure easier access to healthy meals, provide higher quality food and meals, and offer better on-site assistance for those it serves. The Food Bank is committed to ensuring the sustainability for its innovative healthy food sourcing and sharing programs like the **Mid-Atlantic Regional Produce Cooperative, MilitaryShare, ElderShare** and fresh produce and milk, among others. The Food Bank has also created a Bold Goal Grant structure to provide enhanced and streamlined grant opportunities for Partners that seek to provide better access and better food for their clients.

As we all know, we work best when we work together.

2015

Central Pennsylvania Food Bank announces Bold Goal to End Hunger:

By 2025, the Food Bank will provide enough nutritious food to everyone struggling with hunger in each of the 27 counties it serves.

2016

Gov. Tom Wolf releases “Setting the Table: A Blueprint for a Hunger Free PA” which identifies strategies to close the meal gap with nutritious food, establishes goals, and charges the public and private sector with meeting the goals to end hunger.

2017

The Central Pennsylvania Food Bank and its York County agency partners came together looking to make systemic change using a collective impact model, becoming one of the first in the Commonwealth to evaluate the charitable food network at a sub-county level and develop a strategic and comprehensive plan to solve hunger.





A SEAT AT THE TABLE

EVALUATING THE CHARITABLE FOOD SYSTEM IN YORK COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA



Exciting New Tool to Break Down Barriers to Access to Healthy Meals

This year, the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank and its York County-based partners completed a deep assessment of food insecurity in York County that visually identified food security gaps at the local level and recommended strategies to eliminate them. A comprehensive report of this assessment, titled “A Seat at the Table”, is available at centralpafoodbank.org/satt.

The process, which will be deployed in Lancaster County in the near future, was developed with a grant from the Memorial Health Fund and with the assistance of The Food Trust based in Philadelphia. It clearly showed that despite the more than 100 hard-working partners, York County’s food assistance network requires more collaboration, innovation, and community investment to reach under-served residents in low-access locales. This is a significant challenge in a county where an estimated 55,000 food insecure neighbors live, similar in magnitude to Lancaster County.

Following are some of the SATT assessment findings that are also relevant in Lancaster and elsewhere in the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank’s service territory:

- » Divides between the city and the county
- » Competition versus collaboration
- » Programming that has not evolved to provide the services needed to those struggling with food insecurity today
- » Food purchased retail as opposed to leveraging food banks and other lower-cost sources
- » Duplication of services
- » Lack of coordination and communication
- » Provision and distribution of low-quality, unhealthy foods

With the data provided by this student, members of the collaborative have now definitively identified areas of need in the local charitable food system, gaps in services, duplication of services and made recommendations for improvements.

2019



The Central Pennsylvania Food Bank rolls out its “Better Access, Better Food, Better Together” construct and Bold Goal Grant system in York, Lancaster, and several other counties.





First Lady Shines a Light on College Food Insecurity

First Lady Frances Wolf this year highlighted another group struggling with food security - college students.

During Hunger Action Month, she convened a roundtable discussion college hunger with Pennsylvania Education Secretary Pedro Rivera and Human Services Secretary Teresa Miller, higher education professionals, students, and anti-hunger advocates.

A federal Government Accountability Office report issued in January 2019 found that at least one in three college students do not always have enough to eat.

Governor Wolf has made ending hunger an ongoing commitment, launching the Governor's Food Security Partnership in September 2015 to address hunger in Pennsylvania across numerous front and coordinate food and nutrition programs and centralize coordination with federal, state and local partners. The Partnership includes the state departments of Aging, Agriculture, Community and Economic Development, Education, and Health and Human Services.

One recent effort illustrates the Wolf Administration commitment to addressing college hunger. In January 2018, the Department of Human Services announced a change to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility for community college students. Under the new policy, community college students enrolled at least part-time and in a qualifying career, technical education, or high-priority occupational training program may receive SNAP benefits if they otherwise qualify for the program. Examples of high-priority occupations includes jobs in technology, education, health care, human services, law enforcement, and skilled trades.





No Time for a Food Drive?

People really want to help, but have no spare time to organize or shop for a food drive.

Sound familiar?

The Central Pennsylvania Food Bank has come up with a solution: a virtual food drive to help you engage while saving your precious time!

This web-based feature enables individuals and organizations to host a "food drive" through the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank's website. The virtual "store" allows users to scan items at a

check-out station instead of physically running to buy food and find a drop off location. With just a few clicks, anyone can purchase the most-needed items and make a difference in the lives of our neighbors in need. The Virtual Food Drive shoppers provide the monetary support, and the Food Bank team puts its immense buying power to work to acquire the healthy food items needed most.

To learn more, visit: centralpafoodbank.org/ways-to-give/give-funds/virtual-food-drive





New Fresh Express Pantry in Columbia: HFLC Partners Working Better, Together

In October, HFLC partners **Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health**, the **Central Pennsylvania Food Bank** and **Community Action Partnership** re-opened a mobile food pantry offering fresh produce and healthy food options in Columbia. Known as “Fresh Express,” this program can be found in two locations:

- » **Fresh Express Columbia:** Fourth Friday of every month from 3:30-5:30 p.m at Park Elementary School 520 S. 6th St., Columbia PA 17512
- » **Fresh Express Factory Ministries:** Second Saturday of every month, 10 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Together Community Center 3293 Lincoln Hwy East, Paradise PA 17562

In addition, LG Health will offer special food-preparation sessions at the Columbia Fresh Express during pantry hours on Sept. 27 and Nov. 22.

Fresh Express is free to individuals and families from Columbia who meet income guidelines (for example, at or below an annual income of \$37,650 for a family of four). Upon arrival, customers sign a simple form that confirms they meet the income guidelines, and then they can shop and select the products.

“People who are food-insecure, meaning they do not have enough food for an active, healthy

lifestyle, are at risk of more chronic diseases related to diet, like diabetes and heart disease,” said Heather Rotella, Health Promotion Specialist at LG Health. “Having access to affordable fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods is very important for our community’s health.” Rotella added that the program offers fresh fruits, vegetables, milk and eggs to participants.

To register for the program, call 717-684-1497. To learn more about the Fresh Express program, **visit [this page](#)**.





“Food as Medicine” Program Debuts at Lancaster General Health

Recognizing the importance of a healthy diet in achieving and maintaining health, Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health recently rolled out a **“Food Pharmacy” program**.

As part of this pilot program, food-insecure patients with pre-diabetes and/or metabolic syndrome from select primary care practices can be referred to meet with a dietitian or nurse for free nutrition counseling twice a month. These visits, which occur at partner food pantry locations, include help with choosing healthy foods to take home and a

welcome kit with basic nutrition information and tools, reusable tote bags, measuring cups and spoons, and recipes.

“We know that eating healthy foods can lower the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, cancer, diabetes, and even death,” said Heather Rotella, Health Promotion Specialist at LG Health. “Changing to a healthy diet is often better than medicine and having a nurse or dietitian there to help can make all the difference.”





Hunger-Free Lancaster County Advocacy Grows

One of Hunger-Free Lancaster's key roles is to serve as an advocate for better anti-hunger policies. Its Advocacy Action Team, chaired by Amy Hill, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy for the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, is engaged at every level in monitoring and speaking out on issues bearing on food security, which this year included:

FEDERAL

- In December 2018, Congress passed a strong, bipartisan federal Farm Bill that maintained the requirements for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and increased funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) which brings millions of pounds of fresh, agricultural products from America's farms to the charitable food network. The Farm Bill also included a new Farm-to-Food Bank provision, modeled after the Pennsylvania Agriculture Surplus System (PASS) that will provide a small amount of funding to help rescue good food from farms that might otherwise be discarded.
- Despite Congress rejecting changes to SNAP work requirements, eligibility of immigrant families, and categorical eligibility, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) proposed regulatory changes to SNAP that would implement these burdensome requirements.
- The good bipartisanship of the Farm Bill debate was overshadowed by the 5-week government shutdown.
- Looking forward, we will turn our attention to the Child Nutrition Reauthorization legislation. There is an opportunity to make some critical changes to the bill that will make it easier to feed children in need, especially in our Summer Feeding Programs.

STATE

- Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System (PASS) - PASS covers the costs associated with harvesting, processing, packaging and transporting surplus agricultural products including fruits, vegetables, dairy, eggs and meat to donate those items to the charitable food system. PASS was level-funded at \$1.5 million in the 2019-2020 Commonwealth Budget.
- State Food Purchase Program (SFPP) - SFPP provides resources to emergency food providers in all 67 counties to purchase food and nutritional supplements like infant formula, to move and store food from farmers and retailers, and leverage the purchase of federal commodities. SFPP was level-funded at \$18.1 million in the 2019-2020 Commonwealth Budget.
- Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) - NAP was the one bright spot in the state budget. The number of tax credits available through NAP doubled from \$18 million to \$36 million. NAP encourages businesses to invest in projects which improve distressed areas by giving them a tax credit for their financial or in-kind donation including projects that focus on improving food security. Eligible projects for this Charitable Food Program include nonprofit regional food banks that provide food to local nonprofit food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, or feeding centers that provide food packages or meals to people in need of food assistance.

A Powerful Agent of Change

Hunger-Free Lancaster County continues to serve as the food security committee of the Lancaster Coalition to Combat Poverty, which has been engaged in ending poverty and improving the quality of life in Lancaster since 2015.

With a mission to cut Lancaster City's poverty in half by 2032, this innovative and broadly supported coalition chaired by Jennifer Koppel, Executive Director of the Lancaster County Coalition to End Homelessness, focuses on:

- » Improving core services and how they are experienced by people in poverty
- » Building pathways to financial independence through education and training
- » Looking at how wages, hiring practices, financial literacy, credit ratings and predatory lending impact those living in poverty
- » Examining what works to recognize and reduce barriers to overcoming poverty

Notable recent LCCP highlights include:

- » 9.25 % reduction in poverty in the first full year of the Coalition;
- » New transportation service from Lancaster to the High Companies facilities enabling 45 people to access family-sustaining jobs;
- » Focused attention on universal pre-K and full day Kindergarten in Lancaster;
- » A pilot project that will match 10 local mothers with one-year jobs at the Four Seasons with support services for their families, including day care, transportation, financial literacy, life skills and more;
- » How to avoid the "Cliff Effect," when families emerging from poverty lose still-needed public benefits.





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