

SUMMER 2014



MARYLAND
FOOD BANK
UNTIL HUNGER ENDS.

Nurturing the Network

THE SAFETY NET BENEATH THE SAFETY NET



A NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF THE MARYLAND FOOD BANK

IN THIS ISSUE *Beneath the Safety Net* • *Spring Gleaning* • *Meet the New Website*

LETTER FROM THE CEO

The Safety Net

When I first arrived at the Maryland Food Bank in 2007, I believed that food was the single, critical resource that our network of partner agencies needed in order to succeed. We worked hard to diversify our inventory and streamline food distribution to partners, but still, we saw these agencies struggling to respond to demand.

So, I decided to test my theory and asked the staff to embark on a thorough analysis of our partner network. I wanted to better understand the inner workings of the agencies we relied on to distribute food. We talked to partners, visited sites and saw operations first hand. We listened as they told us about the unique challenges facing them — and the communities they served.

The reality, we came to understand, was more complex than I had imagined. We learned that while food was the most essential resource, it alone would not keep our network of 975+ pantries, kitchens, and shelters in operation.

Our partners are seeing the impact of a sputtering economy every single day. MFB agencies are trying to reach more people in need, more efficiently. To keep up with the increasing demand, they tell us they need more funding, better technology, more training, and lots of volunteers.

What we discovered seven years ago still holds true today — and we've developed the skills to support our fast-growing network of partners. Our programs team works every day to strengthen the complex web of resources and relationships that we provide to our partners.

In combination, these approaches keep many Marylanders from falling all the way down. That is the nature of the Maryland Food Bank safety net.

Thank you for your ongoing support of our work.



DEBORAH FLATEMAN PRESIDENT & CEO



ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This issue is all about Partnerships, Collaboration & Consolidation — one of four tenets in our strategic five-year plan. Read on to learn how we're building relationships to bring about change.

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▼ *Joe-Sam Swann of Swann Farms stands behind hundreds of pounds of corn that will soon be distributed to hungry families across the state.*



Photo: Tim Pely



**MARYLAND
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2014 Map the Meal Gap Report



▲ A family gathers fresh produce, bread, and other household staples at a mobile pantry event.

The family pictured above is among the 483,490 people who are food insecure in our service area, according to Feeding America's latest Map the Meal Gap Report. Released in April and comprised of data from the U.S.D.A, U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, the report hints at an alarming trend. In the 22 counties served by the Maryland Food Bank, 12.3% of people lack consistent access to sufficient amounts of nutritious food — up .6% from the previous year.

That increase may seem slight, but in concrete terms, it means 25,000 more people don't know where their next meal is coming from, and many of them are children. It also means that hungry Marylanders are missing more meals than ever before — 84.7 million each year compared to 74.6 million previously.

Maryland is not alone in experiencing this uptick. Approximately 60 percent of counties nationwide saw food insecurity rates rise. But while we may be part of a national trend, what happened in 2012 — the year that the data was collected — that left so many people unable to properly nourish themselves and their families?

Looking back, the obvious answers are unemployment and underemployment. Much of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stimulus funding ended in 2012, meaning the loss of some government-contracted jobs. Sparrow's Point Steel Mill in East Baltimore closed, laying off roughly 2,000 workers. And, according to the Maryland Budget & Tax Policy Institute, half of Marylanders who received unemployment insurance in 2012 had exhausted their benefits by the end of the year and were left struggling.

Those able to re-enter the workforce found opportunities that either paid less or required more education. More than 5,700 jobs requiring little-to-no-higher education were lost, according to the Maryland State Department of Planning, at an average salary of \$66,000 per year. Those gained were in retail and food service, paying an average salary of \$34,000. With Maryland's high cost of living, even families with two adults working full-time were often unable to make ends meet.

The question now is: where are we today? Though the next Map the Meal Gap Report won't be released until April 2015, we fortunately have our network partners and



In our service area,

483,490

people don't know where their next meal is coming from

and **35%** are children

Average salary of jobs lost requiring little to no higher education (manufacturing)*

\$66,000

Average salary of jobs gained requiring little to no higher education (retail, food service, social service)

\$34,000

**Maryland State Department of Planning*

programs staff in the field, seeing the trends in real time. And according to them, this year's report may be just the tip of the iceberg. Families were dealt a serious blow in November 2013 when Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (commonly known as food stamps) were cut by \$11 per person.

Since then our partners have noticed a considerable rise in need, with more clients coming in every day.

The good news is, we're working closely with our network to meet this challenge head on. Merging the Maryland Food Bank's expertise and analysis with the on-the-ground insight our partners can provide, we are doing our best to meet the growing need. Together, we are weaving an ever-tighter safety net for those at risk of slipping into the meal gap. And we will continue to grow this impact...until hunger ends.



▲ Western Branch Managing Director Matt Thompson stands in new office space that will be completed this fall.

Spotlight: Western Maryland

In analyzing the 2014 Map the Meal Gap Report, one region stood out: Western Maryland. Allegany, Frederick, Garrett and Washington counties reflected significant increases in food insecurity from 2011–2012. But fortunately, during that same time period, we established the Maryland Food Bank – Western Branch and began laying the groundwork for a hunger-free future.

At the time, we saw a region that was rich in food sources, but facing serious challenges—from explosive population growth to limited employment opportunities and a rising cost of living. In 2012, we merged with one of our longtime partners, Food Resources, and officially launched the Western Branch. The growth since then has been rapid, with distribution going from 1.2 million pounds annually in FY '12 to 2.4 million in FY '13 to more than 5 million in FY '14.

"It has a lot to do with infrastructure," says Managing Director of the Western Branch Matt Thompson. "With a physical location here, we can now source food in these areas and build stronger relationships within the communities."

So far, the Maryland Food Bank's emphasis on relationship-building has been key to the Western Branch's unprecedented success. And the infrastructure-building is still in progress. With smart investments and strong relationships in the community, we're optimistic that next year's Map the Meal Gap Report will show some serious gains on hunger!

Beneath the Safety Net

In order to move food quickly and efficiently, the Maryland Food Bank collaborates with a network of food pantries, shelters, schools, and faith-based organizations across the state. We work closely with these 975 network partners to catch the hungry Marylanders who are slipping through our weakened public safety net. Together we are the safety net beneath the safety net.

As Map the Meal Gap numbers have shown, hunger continues to spread in Maryland. Our network partners foretold the statistics, having served the people behind the numbers for years. Every day, our partners see the impact of a jittery economy — in longer lines, new faces, and more plates to fill.

With food-insecurity maintaining a firm grip on communities across the state, we're urging our partner agencies to assess what it will take to reach more people in need, more efficiently. They tell us that in order to keep pace with the increasing demand, they need more funding, better technology, more training, and lots of volunteers. We know these constraints all too well, and we're pooling our expertise to provide partner agencies with as many resources as we possibly can.

The infrastructure of the Maryland Food Bank allows us to provide, teach, and nurture our network partners. Over the years, we have developed a vast support system for the 975 soup kitchens, pantries, shelters, schools, senior centers, and other community-based organizations we partner with across the state. And, in return, our partner agencies provide us with invaluable insight into the communities we're serving, allowing us to develop better, smarter solutions.

Our network provides real-time information

While we often think big and talk in large numbers — almost 500,000 Marylanders don't always know where their next meal will come from — we know that behind every statistic is a person: a child, a family, a senior citizen. It is our network partners that keep us connected to the day-to-day reality of those who are food-insecure in Maryland.

Our ongoing conversation with the 975+ agencies with whom we work provides us with a direct connection and a crystal clear look at the changing face of hunger in Maryland. The running dialogue we've established with network



▲ NPAC Manager Clarrissa Taylor talks with Reverend Samuel at Fishes & Loaves pantry about capacity.

partners is something that significantly differentiates the Maryland Food Bank from other organizations. This relationship provides us access to real-time information that, in turn, allows us to respond quickly to changing needs across the state.

In the past few years, feedback from partners has revealed an alarming trend. More and more, those accessing the food assistance network are working families. Further economic analysis allowed us to make sense of this changing demographic.

Last year, when long-term unemployment insurance ended for thousands of Marylanders, our network felt the impact of that decision. When SNAP benefits were reduced, our network experienced a doubling, even tripling, of demand, especially toward the end of the month when benefits ran short.

In response, we've been working closely with partners to provide them with the resources they need to meet this



◀ *Maryland Food Bank partners join together at an Network Partner Area Council (NPAC) meeting, to share concerns, get advice, and develop community-specific solutions.*

changing need. Still, we work hard to keep an eye in the sky. We realize that our expertise — our big picture thinking — is key to maintaining a strong network of partners.

Nurturing new partners from beginning to end

The desire to “do something” can be strong and we frequently field requests from groups that want to start a food pantry or feeding program in their community.

At some point in time, every food pantry or feeding program started out as an idea... an individual inspiration.

The Maryland Food Bank has great expertise to offer to those just starting out, and we appreciate the trust that the community puts in us as an expert in the field of hunger relief.

When dealing with prospective partners, the first question we ask ourselves is: “Is this organization positioned to respond efficiently and effectively to significant, unmet need?”

If the answer is yes, the partner is welcomed into our network and provided with access to all of the hunger-relief resources we have to offer.

Among these resources, food is central, but we also offer these partners everything from trainings — on grant writing and food safety to name a few — to storage equipment and technological solutions.

We work to provide continuous support to our partners and encourage them to do the same to one another by collaborating through our Network Partner Area Councils (NPACs), a partner-mentoring community.

While we are happy to work one-on-one with new partners, the most successful technique is often to pair new agencies with more experienced organizations to provide day-to-day guidance and teach best practices.

This spirit of mentorship was evident at a recent meeting of MFB agencies, as one young agency expressed the need to reach more people. “We’re in a high-traffic area,” said one volunteer. “Maybe we should invest in a banner to hang outside?”

Longtime Maryland Food Bank partner Reverend Andre Samuel from Faith Tabernacle Church in Southwest Baltimore spoke up: “If I were you, I’d start with the schools and senior homes in the area. Take some fliers. Once they know you’re there, and a reliable resource, they’ll come — and keep coming back.”

The same can be said for many of our longtime network partners — some of which have been coming back to us for over 30 years.

Today, nurturing our network is a top priority for the Maryland Food Bank. Being the “safety net beneath the safety net” is careful, delicate work — and work that requires a capable, compassionate network of partners. Together, we continue to expand our impact, striving to strengthen this safety net — and keep hungry Marylanders from descending into the meal gap.

Spring Gleaning

In 2012, residential real estate developer Bernie Fowler, Jr. found a way to merge local agriculture and hunger relief into one, community-centric enterprise. He called it Farming 4 Hunger, and today his organization donates thousands of pounds of fresh produce to the Maryland Food Bank. One thing that's been critical to Farming 4 Hunger's success is its partnership with the Maryland State Department of Corrections. Here, Bernie tells us how they have increased the amount of food reaching communities in need, and transformed the lives of ex-offenders.

Q. Before you forged a partnership with the Department of Corrections, what was your labor force like?

A. Initially, it was volunteers from local churches, a few businesses, and a few schools. Unfortunately, volunteers were mostly available on weekends, and that was a problem for us because we needed to harvest food throughout the week. The introduction of the Inmate Outreach Program just took us to another level.

Q. How does the Inmate Outreach Program work?

A. The Department of Corrections drives the inmates to the farm, Monday through Friday, and they glean in the fields from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. On the very first day that a new group comes out, I sit them down on the porch of the barn and explain what Farming 4 Hunger is all about. They go from total resistance to being there, to realizing that there's a purpose, and that some of them may even be helping their own families by gathering the food.



▲ Inmates participating in Farming 4 Hunger's Inmate Outreach Program take a break from their work to pose for a picture in front of a Maryland Food Bank truck.

Q. What are the goals of the program?

A. At first I thought it was just about getting people to work, so we could get more food out to those in need. But the program has evolved beyond that. We now have ex-inmates volunteering to go out into the community and talk about the consequences of the choices you make in life. I've also done networking to get some businesses to come out and talk to the inmates. Some business owners have actually given inmates jobs while they're still incarcerated so that when they get out, they have a something waiting for them.

Q. Thus far, what would you say has been the outcome of this program?

A. In a nutshell, with this program we've been able to distribute three times the produce to hungry families. And now we've got inmates contributing to the community in other ways. It's funny — we at Farming 4 Hunger thought we were here to help these inmates, but they came in and lifted us up.



Plant Some Seeds!

Our Farm to Food Bank Program partners with farmers to provide hungry Marylanders with fresh produce. Now you can be part of the Farm to Food Bank Network, too—by helping us purchase produce from local farmers! \$50 can support a small plot, and you can donate up to one acre of produce with a \$5,000 contribution. Visit www.mdfoodbank.org/donate and select "Farm to Food Bank" from the "Area of Support" dropdown menu.

Ending Childhood Hunger Together

Governor Martin O'Malley has set the bar pretty high — he wants to end childhood hunger in Maryland by 2015. But we're up for the challenge, serving as a founding member of The Partnership to End Childhood Hunger, a coalition of government agencies and nonprofits that are committed to solving youth hunger — together.

Every other month, the group meets to discuss progress toward the shared goal and the roadblocks they've encountered. More than 15 partners have joined the initiative since 2008, implementing a wide variety of strategies — from distributing food directly to children in need to connecting families to federal resources like the Free and Reduced Price Meal Program in schools.

With key stakeholders around the table, the partnership has made steady progress, enrolling 63,000 more at-risk

children in the state's free breakfast program and getting tens of millions of meals out to children when school is not in session. Here at the food bank, a seat at the table has meant greater collaboration with other anti-hunger organizations and access to funding sources that we might not otherwise have had.

For example, in 2010 the Partnership to End Childhood Hunger applied for and ultimately received a Hunger-Free Community Grant from the U.S.D.A. It would have been nearly impossible to garner the U.S.D.A.'s attention on our own. Being part of a broad-based coalition got us noticed, and the resulting \$300,000 grant sowed the seeds for the Farm to Food Bank Program, which redistributes more than 5 million pounds of fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables each year. Much of this fresh food is distributed through



our MFB Kids programs, ensuring good, nutritious food reaches kids in need year-round.

And it has made a difference, says Anne Sheridan, Executive Director of the Governor's Office for Children, and co-chair of the Partnership to End Childhood Hunger. "The Maryland Food Bank deserves credit for raising awareness of hunger. They've been a wonderful partner and a big part of our success."

Photo: Mike Morgan



▲ *Rondell Williams checks in with some of the boys as they enjoy a healthy MFB Kids™ meal at the Bywater Boys & Girls Club.*

Fresh Food & Family

One place that has reaped the benefits of the Partnership to End Childhood Hunger and the fresh food it's brought, is the Bywater Boys & Girls Club in Anne Arundel County. "Obesity is a problem I worry about," says Assistant Director Rondell Williams. "At home, if the kids ate at all, it would be late and they would go straight to bed. A lot of them don't have anyone to set a schedule for them. Here, they get good food and stability. We sit down together as a family. Then they have energy to go play and get a good night's sleep so they're ready for school."

It's easy to see how vital the club is to the kids, ages 5–18. On a recent afternoon, they gulped down milk and fresh fruit before heading outside to ride bikes, jump rope and make general mischief with their friends.

WE ARE... TAKING THE LEAD



Meet the New Website

After months of hard work behind the scenes, the Maryland Food Bank is thrilled to announce the launch of a new, improved website!

Leaving no page untouched, we've done a complete overhaul of both the content and the layout of our site. But don't worry! Nothing has disappeared. You can find all of the same key information by browsing the two navigation bars that appear at the top of the site.

Now, let's take a look at some of the new features we're most excited about...

Home Page

Our new home page has a beautiful slideshow front-and-center, with links to breaking news, client stories, program updates and other need-to-know information throughout the site. Keep an eye out for sidebars as you click through, which showcase other interesting pages to explore.

Donate

We've completely revamped our donations page, with the Donate Now option prominent, plus other important options like legacy gifts, tribute giving, project sponsorships, and much more!

More Mobile

In the process of redesigning our old site, we decided it was time to bring connectivity into the 21st century. Our new website is fully responsive for easy mobile browsing and is also 100% tablet-friendly. Now you can donate, get information, and contact us on the go!

News & Events

Accessible on the navigation bar at the top of the page, this section is packed full of information on both the inner workings of the Maryland Food Bank and what we're doing in the community.

The Feed

Also in the News & Events section is our new blog, The Feed. Here's where we'll examine the latest hunger statistics in-depth, profile our partners, and explore the impact of our programs. You won't want to miss out, so check back every Wednesday for new stories!

Let us know what you think! Check out the new site for yourself and leave us feedback by e-mailing us at marketing@mdfoodbank.org.

Kids Helping Kids



The annual Kids Helping Kids Food & Funds Drive is exactly what it sounds like: a chance for kids to collect food and monetary donations to help fellow students in need, often right in their own community. While some schools deliver their collections to the Maryland Food Bank and local pantries, others, in low-income communities, put the food right on the shelves of their own school pantry — making it immediately available to students and their families.

The 2013 campaign ran October 14 – November 1, but top schools are honored in the spring to keep the drive in the spotlight throughout the school year. This year, 562 schools joined the effort — shattering all previous participation records. Altogether, students, teachers and parents collected 414,249 pounds of food and \$121,428! South River High School was the champion for the fifth consecutive year, gathering 15,820 pounds of food, and \$49,733 — more than 40 percent of the total funds collected!

This year marked the first Kids Helping Kids Food & Funds Drive since its founder Larry Adam passed away in 2013. But with the Maryland State Department of Education on board and more kids getting involved every year, the outcome would have made him proud. In these children, Larry saw the next generation of anti-hunger leaders. If this campaign is any reflection of their compassion and dedication to fighting hunger, we believe that Maryland's future will be in very good hands.



▲ Top row: A student from West Salisbury Elementary helps out; A new look for the 2014 KHK campaign. Middle row: Students and staff from Cockeysville Middle School accept their award from Dr. Darla Strouse of the Maryland State Department of Education. Bottom row: Students from Central Elementary stock up on canned goods; Students from Perry Hall High count their pennies!



We are...

Maryland Food Bank

It takes more than just food and funds to operate the Maryland Food Bank. We simply could not have distributed 29 million meals last year without the dedication and commitment of many thousands of Marylanders.

Let's do the numbers...

More than 135 staff, three branch locations with a combined 125,000 square feet of inventory, 975 partner agencies, 9,000 volunteers, a dedicated board of directors and more than 31,000 donors and supporters, just like you.

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

Join us online.



www.mdfoodbank.org

Save the Date: Hunger Action Month

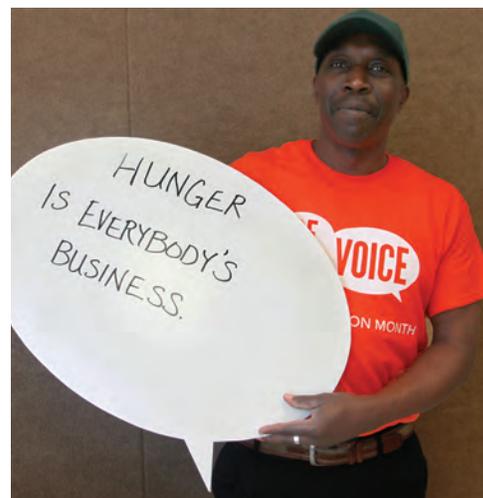
This September, join the Maryland Food Bank and concerned citizens across the state as we celebrate Hunger Action Month. Being a voice for hunger means more than just passively supporting the cause — it means educating yourself and then taking action. Here are some ways you can get involved during the month of September:

Download our Hunger Action Toolkit:

Educate yourself on the issue of hunger in Maryland by downloading the **Hunger Action Toolkit** and checking out the quick facts. Learn about ways that you can fight hunger within your own community.

Be A Voice online: Draw attention to the issue of hunger in Maryland by sharing your opinions on social media and taking a "selfie" with our Be A Voice speech bubble.

Go Orange: Go orange — the official color of hunger relief — on **September 4** at work, on your social media feeds, and with your clothes. Get creative with it!



▲ MFB staffer Bernard Kenly shows why he's a voice for hunger.



September 19: Be A Voice Hunger Action Symposium

And of course, we'll invite supporters to join us at the most anticipated anti-hunger event of the year: our annual Be A Voice Hunger Action Symposium. Register online at beavoicet2014.eventbrite.com.

Join thought leaders from across the state in a cutting-edge discussion of the challenges we face and the latest thinking on how to overcome them.

Keynote speaker: Ertharin Cousin

As current Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme, Ertharin Cousin will bring more than 25 years of leadership on national and international hunger issues to the symposium stage.



Ted Talks • Q&A sessions • Hunger Advocacy Awards Luncheon

Save your spot now at beavoicet2014.eventbrite.com.