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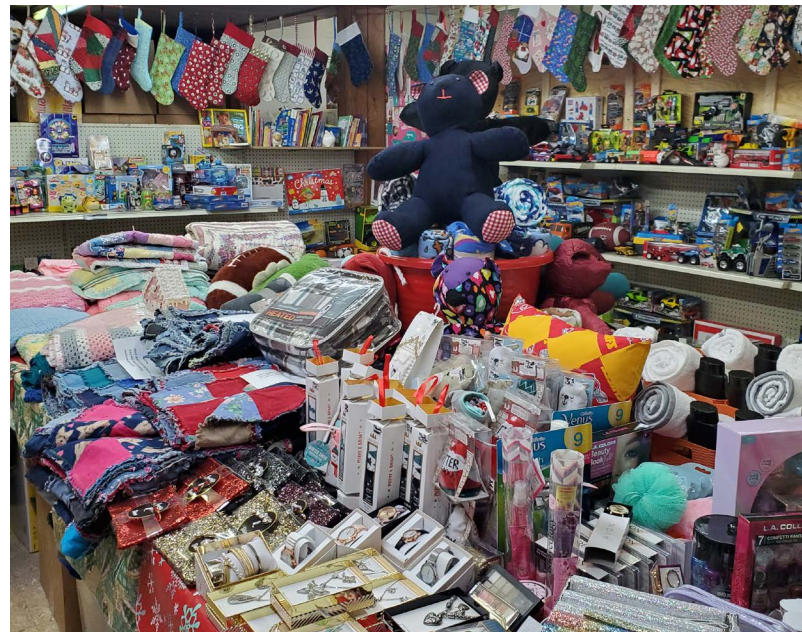
WINTER 2021

Helping Families Celebrate The Holidays Palmyra Pantry Holds Christmas Store

Facing one of the most challenging years in its history, with the help from their community, the Palmyra Area Food Pantry still pulled together the resources for an annual holiday tradition — the Christmas Store.

In 2020, the number of people seeking help from a food bank increased 60%, according to Feeding America. Millions of Americans face food insecurity because of COVID-19. Thanks to The Food Bank and its 140 partner agencies, food was one less problem for families during the holiday season.

The Palmyra Area Food Pantry is proud to serve their community through the pandemic's challenges. As a partner agency, the pantry received 513,737 pounds of food from The Food Bank last year. During the summer, the pantry was not sure if it would be possible to stay open. **In 2019, 60 families were served weekly. In the final months of 2020, up to 100 families were served each week during the pandemic.** The demand for food increased but the donation numbers were low. Then, Sharon Wommack, co-director of the Palmyra Area Food Pantry, reached out to the Minister of Alliance and wrote a story



asking people to give. Since then, donations have increased steadily.

“If our community knows you need something, people are right there to help you get it,” Wommack said.

One tradition that remained at Palmyra Area Food Pantry was the annual Christmas Store. The pantry

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How We Shared Food and Brought Hope in 2020



FOOD BANK'S WORK, A RESULT OF YOUR SUPPORT

We use many terms to describe the past year — words like unprecedented, challenging and surreal. Each of these could not be more fitting. However, at The Food Bank, we try to mix in one other word as we help people during the pandemic: **gratitude**.

The Food Bank is grateful to you, our donors and volunteers, for the critical support you have provided so we can escalate our work to meet the need. We are grateful for our staff at The Food Bank and Central Pantry, who have accomplished their work with tremendous dedication and overcome the challenges of the past year. Lastly, we are grateful to our partner agencies and the communities we serve for rallying around The Food Bank to share food and bring hope.

In 2020, the number of food-insecure Missourians jumped by 189,000 to a total over one million, according to Feeding America projections. In The Food Bank's service area of 32 counties alone, **123,780 people face food insecurity last year. That's up from around 100,000 in 2018**, meaning thousands more families lacked consistent access to nutritional food for a healthy lifestyle.

The unfortunate truth is that the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals and families will last long after the crisis is over. Savings are depleted, job insecurity is higher and the strain on families will be lasting. Many are forced to choose between purchasing essentials like medication and utilities or enough groceries for the week.

The Food Bank is here to aid all people facing these difficult situations, giving them the nutritional food needed for a healthier lifestyle and helping them out of difficult times. The most important piece of that effort is you, our donors and partners. Your support will continue to be needed as we help people through the times ahead.

Gratefully,

Lindsay Young Lopez
President and CEO

We are grateful to our partner agencies and the communities we serve for rallying around The Food Bank to share food and bring hope.

Host a Food Drive

If you are interested in giving to The Food Bank, consider hosting a food or fund drive. Food drives allow communities to collect non-perishable items for The Food Bank. **Most-needed items include canned meat, canned fruits and vegetables, beans, rice, cereal, peanut butter, soup and pasta.** Any donations of perishable goods such as fresh produce or bread may be taken directly to your local pantry.

You can also host a virtual food drive to raise donations. A virtual food drive can be in addition to your in-person food drive or by itself. This is a great option if you are unable to deliver donations to The Food Bank Warehouse. Through our partnership with Feeding America, we are also able to purchase food at a much lower cost than what you pay at a grocery store. That means monetary gifts are the most effective way to give.

To get started, you can find fun food drive ideas and resources on our website when registering your food drive. If you plan to collect more than

200 pounds of food, you may request our help with the delivery and pick-up of donation barrels. You can register online at sharefoodbringhope.org/fooddrive.



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organizes the store during the holiday season for the Palmyra community. At the Christmas Store, children can receive one big toy and two small toys for the holidays. In 2019, the pantry was able to provide gifts to 300 kids.

To follow COVID-19 guidelines, only one to two families were allowed in the store at a time. Outside of the store, there were markers six feet apart on the ground. Once one family went down the first aisle, another family was allowed in to pick out toys.

All gift items were donated from the community. After Wommack made a public appeal, the number of gifts doubled to over 400. Among the gifts were hats and scarves made by local people. One donor made 300 stockings to hand out to children.

The Christmas Store was open every Tuesday in December leading up to Christmas. **With one**

week before Christmas in 2020, 286 children already received toys. Wommack said she expected 100 more kids would attend before the end of December. **"The pantry had to replenish toys after the second day of the store, with 2020 being Palmyra Area Food Pantry's biggest year so far,"** Wommack added.

Thousands of local families across Missouri face food insecurity for the first time, and many could not afford holiday gifts in 2020. Partner agencies like Palmyra Area Food Pantry make it possible for more people to partake in treasured holiday celebrations. Wommack said one family of five she served worried about what they would do during the holidays.

"Without our help, they would not have anything for Christmas," said Wommack.



Sharing Food Through a Network 140 Strong

LOCAL PARTNER AGENCIES AND SCHOOLS ARE THE BACKBONE OF THE FOOD BANK'S WORK

People often think of The Food Bank as a singular piece — an organization that helps people by itself out of one location. It is a common misconception every food bank faces. In reality, The Food Bank is the distribution center to a network of 140 partner agencies and 150 schools feeding communities across 32 counties.

Partner agencies are your local food pantry, soup kitchen, senior center, or other type of hunger-relief organization. The Food Bank provides most of the food these agencies distribute to their communities. **Of the more than 30 million pounds The Food Bank distributes every year, nearly all of it goes through these non-profit partners.** To join The Food Bank's network, these independent organizations pledge to provide food free of charge to those in need, maintain regular hours and adhere to a list of other requirements like following proper food safety. To get partner agencies the food they distribute to people, The Food Bank delivers is by truck or organizes a pick-up time at its main facility.

Partner agencies range from small organizations based in church basements that help a few dozen each month to large centers of giving

that help thousands. **Nearly 40% of The Food Bank's partner agencies are run entirely by volunteers, powered only by the dedication of a few people wanting to help their community.** All of these agencies have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing changes in food distribution, volunteer work and the number of people needing assistance.

The Food Bank's smallest partner agency, **Destiny Worship Center Food Pantry, provided food to an average of 42 people every month in the beginning of 2020. By November of last year, that number increased to 95 per month.** The largest partner agency, **Central Pantry, which is owned and operated by The Food Bank, normally helps a monthly average of 10,350 people. In November of 2020, Central Pantry helped more than 14,000 people.**

The work of partner agencies is vital to ensuring people across central and northeast Missouri receive the help they need. The Food Bank is incredibly grateful for their dedication and proud of its partnership with them.