

Neighbors In Need

Fall 2018

Bringing healthy food to those in need for 35 years

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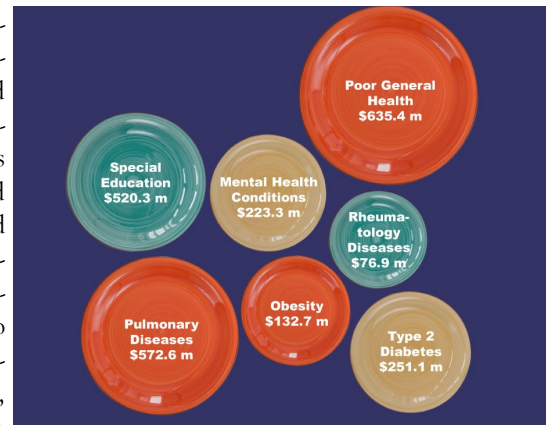
Gaby Martello
Lisa Smith
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Food is Medicine

We've all heard the saying "an apple a day keeps the doctor away", but there's more truth in that than you may think. We know that what we put in our bodies is extremely important and correlates with our health and wellness. So when the only accessible foods are high in fats or highly processed, health is at risk, particularly for children in the early stages of development. Unfortunately, many Massachusetts residents are not getting the nutritious foods they need to live a healthy life, including right here in our community, especially Lawrence, the poorest city in the state.

Hunger and food insecurity do not exist in a vacuum; their consequences are far reaching, impacting everyone. As the leading cause of costly health conditions in the state of Massachusetts, hunger and food insecurity place an unnecessary strain on the economy, and ultimately taxpayers. Research conducted by Children's Health Watch and sponsored by the Greater Boston Food Bank (GBFB) shows that an estimated \$2.4 billion went towards medical bills for avoidable food insecurity and hunger-related issues in 2016 alone. This encompasses doctors visits and emergency room treatment. According to a study done by the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), hunger in children has been known to cause cognitive and behavioral, as well as health problems. The adverse experience of hunger makes the school day a real challenge, ultimately costing more in support expenses for parents and taxpayers. Additionally, the burden of health complications also leads to low productivity, lost work time, and premature death. In short, hunger leads to a vicious cycle of physical and mental health concerns, leading to difficulties finding or maintaining a job, leading to more hunger. (con't p.2)

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Graphic from GBFB showing how the costs of hunger add up in medical bills



Neighbors In Need fights hunger locally by distributing healthy food at 13 Food Pantries strategically located in the neighborhoods of Greater Lawrence. 9 of these pantries are open to the public. NIN also helps hungry infants and infants with diaper need, by providing caregivers formula, diapers and other necessities for children under the age of 5 at our Lawrence office.

Food is Medicine (con't from p. 1)

To combat the consequences of hunger GBFB and Children's Health Watch have partnered with local healthcare centers to screen for hunger and food insecurity and to connect individuals and families to resources before the problem gets too severe. They are also advocating on the state and federal level for support of social safety nets. Most importantly, they are advocating for an increase in spending for Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP) as well as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps). Both are important programs that bridge the gap for people that need food.

Neighbors in Need works hard to ensure that our families have the healthy food they need to help prevent hunger's ill-health effects. Last year, we distributed 150,000 pounds of fresh produce. We also focus on providing fresh bread, eggs and cheese, unsweetened cereals, low-fat milk, low-sodium canned soups and vegetables and no-sugar-added canned fruit. Weekly, we provide many basics like milk, and rice and beans, as well as meat to our clients. The meat is primarily chicken legs, whole chickens, fish and low-fat, high-protein ground chicken and turkey. You can help us bring this healthy food to our families! Go to www.needfood.org for more info on what you can do.

In Massachusetts, 652,760 people are struggling with hunger - and of them 167,450 are children.



(Source: feedingamerica.org) As you can see in the above graphic, hunger may be more common than we think. Hunger is easy to hide—it's not easy to tell if someone is hungry unless they tell you!

Helping Hands



Welcome **Gaby Martello**, Merrimack College Community Engagement Fellow! Gaby will be with us through May 2019.

Pfizer volunteers Dana, Damen, Tao, and Kiera in September at NIN food pantries – many thanks!



We're grateful to **The Mother Connection** for their ongoing collections of diapers, formula and wipes!



Love this collection box at the Methuen branch of **The Savings Bank** and we are thankful for their recent donation.



St. Augustine's 4th Graders started their school year volunteering at the NIN Warehouse for Augies Give Back Day!

Neighbors in Need Serves Those Affected by Gas Crisis

By Monday, September 17—just days following the gas explosions and evacuations in Lawrence, Andover and North Andover, Neighbors in Need was fully operational running all 13 of our weekly food pantries, and distributing diapers, formula and other infant supplies at our Lawrence office. We found ourselves doing double-duty to recover from the area power outages and our staffing shortages while still making sure that we were there for those who needed food. In an effort to be sure that our clients have ample food, when they can't cook, we have distributed extra table-ready and easy-cook food to the pantries in the impacted area—lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, sandwich makings, milk and cereal too. A huge thank you to the many area residents who joined our volunteer ranks to help out during this busy week. The volunteer and donor response to our efforts continues to be incredible!



A team of volunteers moves frozen meat from our Andover warehouse to the Merrimack Valley Food Bank during the gas emergency power outages.

While our evacuated clients are now back in their homes, many still don't have gas. For families affected by the September 13th gas emergency this will be a long-term recovery. They have been financially challenged by the loss of perishable food and wages, without heat & hot water, and worn down by the stress of the event. When you live with less, the impact of these events is much greater. Neighbors in Need plans to be with these families throughout their recovery and beyond.

Thanks to the Merrimack Valley Food Bank for freezer space during the power outages and for extra food sent to help clients in the affected areas.



Employees from New Balance helped move food to and from our Food Pantries.

Project Bread provided special funding to Neighbors in Need and to 4 other organizations in the affected area.



Pfizer employees in Andover collected over 2,000 pounds of food. And Pfizer, Inc. made a special contribution towards our efforts.

Will Green, NIN Board member, and minister at Ballard Vale United Church, as well as Ken Peck (not pictured) from First Church Methuen, were our truck drivers for the week. Thanks also to all the volunteers from Ballard Vale United and Free Church for their help!



Kathleen "Kathy" Frost, 1969-2018

On August 31, 2018 dedicated NIN volunteer, Kathy Frost, passed away. We will miss Kathy's smile and the love she showed our families. Our thoughts are with Kathy and her family.



Contact us:

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Bringing healthy food to those in need for 35 years

Help Bring Thanksgiving to Greater Lawrence Families in Need!

How you can help

- Hold a food drive with your friends, neighbors, community organization or place of work.
- Put together one or more meal baskets (see right). Shopping for food for a basket is a great way to engage children.
- Volunteer! Help distribute or deliver meal baskets. Or participate in NIN's family volunteer event on Saturday, November 17.
- Make a cash donation to help purchase chickens, fresh produce and desserts distributed to our smallest families.



To assemble & donate a Thanksgiving Meal Basket

Purchase the following: **Frozen** Turkey* ♥ Fresh potatoes, carrots, broccoli, winter squash and/or other fruits & veggies ♥ Rice & beans: pink beans, red beans, black beans or gandules (a favorite!) ♥ Gravy, herbs or other seasoning packets ♥ Stuffing mix ♥ Cranberry sauce or fresh cranberries ♥ Bread or rolls ♥ Dessert items: fresh pies, baking mixes or other baking supplies and/or pie ingredients (apples, squash, pumpkins) ♥ Coffee, tea, or other festive drink ♥ Paper napkins, other paper goods or table decorations

Call us to let us know you have a meal to donate. Place all items on the above list in one large box or bin (some donors use egg boxes, others use sturdy, large laundry baskets) for drop off at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, November 20. When you contact us, we'll let you know where to bring your meal basket! *Stay tuned—other meat may be needed for our gas-affected families*

Call or email Neighbors in Need at 978-685-8321 or linda@needfood.org for more info or to make your Thanksgiving food donation!