



COMMUNITY
Food WAREHOUSE
OF MERCER COUNTY

HOLIDAY/WINTER 2018

FEEDING HOPE NEWS

Truck-Full of Hope Food Drive

Volunteer Spotlight

Thank you!





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Michael Joanow, Attorney, Joanow Legal
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Gwen Martino, Retired Special Education
Teacher, Warren City Schools

Madge Tamber, Retired Family and
Consumer Science Teacher,
Grove City High School

Dear Friends,

Happy Fall! Well we whizzed by another summer! Time for hot chocolate, fuzzy slippers, cozy blankets, fire in the wood burner/fireplace and soup! My mother always made soup for us during the cold months of fall and winter. I looked forward to coming home from school to smell the aroma of homemade soup – be it chicken, beef, potato or tomato – it was all so delicious! As I write this, I am working late and enjoying a bowl of cauliflower soup! I am so thankful to have such precious memories but I can't help but think of those who don't. Those who don't have the peace of mind to know from where their next meal will come. Those who don't have the basic necessity of life – food.

As we celebrate our 35th year as a food bank in Mercer County, memories flood back to me of our humble beginnings in the basement of the Sharon Herald, of the folks that I met and worked with over the past 33 years, of the work that God has commissioned us to do in helping to feed our neighbor, and of the many, many lives that we have been able to touch. I am so thankful for all these experiences as I am thankful for all of you!

Our work here at the CFWMC is ONLY possible with all the community support and volunteer efforts! Tonight (again, as I am writing this!) is backpack packing and senior box packing and my heart is full to overflowing as the volunteers come in groups or one by one. Their eagerness, commitment, and smiling faces brighten up our day (evening)! They joke with us, encourage us and sometimes even give us a hug! What a joy it is to know so many wonderful folks! The fellowship and comradery are fulfilling and inspirational! Thank you, volunteers, for all the many hours you give in support of our mission to feed the hungry in Mercer County.

November is the kick off of our annual “*Each One Feed One*” holiday mail campaign. This campaign sets the stage for the coming year. We hope that you will prayerfully consider the ongoing needs of the CFWMC. Please help us to meet the needs in Mercer County.

November is also the beginning of the second annual “Truck Full of Hope” gigantic holiday food drive! This year it is sponsored by Taylor Chevrolet of Hermitage! Food will be collected at the dealership to fill up trucks of food from November 1st through December 18th. Our friends from Faith Presbyterian Church also collected food as they walked along the route of the Hermitage Light Up Parade, on November 17. Last year you all donated three trucks full of food! This year, should we try for four or five?

Soon it will be Thanksgiving and then Christmas. These are the months that we all seem to take a good hard look at our past, present and future. Most of us will have fond memories and bright hopes, but for some those thoughts are only dreams. Please join us in making their dreams come true. Help us “Starve Hunger – Feed Hope”!

May the holidays bring peace, joy and love to your hearts!

Be blessed!
Lori Weston



On Thursday, November 1, 2018 Taylor Chevrolet of Hermitage kicked off the 2nd Annual “Truck-Full of Hope” food drive with a media event at 1:00 PM in their Chevy showroom. Matt Taylor of Taylor Chevrolet of Hermitage graciously partnered with the Community Food Warehouse to continue the holiday food drive tradition. "Taylor Chevrolet of Hermitage is proud to be hosting the Truck Full of Hope food drive at our dealership in Hermitage, PA benefiting Community Food Warehouse and their important mission to provide for those who are hungry and to raise awareness of hunger throughout Mercer County," says Matt Taylor.

This year 2 brand new shiny festively decorated trucks boast the food drive signs and are ready to be filled! Residents throughout Mercer County are encouraged to bring their non-perishable food donations to the Chevy showroom at Taylor Chevrolet of Hermitage and fill-the-trucks starting Nov. 1 through December 18. Watch for the “Food Drive Drop Site” signs in front of Taylor Chevrolet. Volunteers from Faith Presbyterian Church also picked up donated food along the route of the Hermitage Holiday Light Parade, on Saturday, November 17, to help fill the trucks.

Last year the Truck-full of Hope food drive brought in 2,663 pounds of much needed food items, filling 3 trucks in 18 days! We hope to fill 5 trucks this year with the drive lasting for 7 weeks! To date, two trucks are full! We hope individuals, churches, organizations, clubs and businesses will join in and help us do that. We would love for you to bring in your donation and take a picture beside the new trucks with a sign of your business or organization and post to social media. Help us make this the best food drive and together we can *Starve Hunger- Feed Hope*.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: *Gwen Martino*

Gwen Martino came here to volunteer at the CFWMC in 2010, after retiring from the Warren City School District, where she was both a librarian and special education teacher for over 30 years. A friend invited her to participate in our annual Race to End Hunger and shortly after, she began volunteering. After volunteering for a year, Gwen joined our Board of Directors.

"I have always had the philosophy (instilled by my parents) that we are put on this earth to make it a better place. If we get to the end of our lives and haven't done that, what were we doing here? I have been so blessed in my life to have a loving family, a good career, and all my basic needs met. If I say there is nothing to eat, I mean there is nothing I want. We regularly come into contact with people who truly have nothing to eat, often through no fault of their own. When I get to the end of my life, I want to know that I made a difference in someone's life," Gwen explaining her philosophy on the importance of volunteering.

Gwen is not only a member of our annual Race to End Hunger committee, but she also heads up the committee for the basket raffle and auction for our biennial Empty Bowls event. She can also be found regularly sorting food with a group from her church and exercise classes, entering data, packing boxes for our MilitaryShare Program, and sorting and bagging produce.

When asked about Gwen, our Executive Director, Lori, had this to say: "Gwen is one of the most committed people I know! Her volunteer ethic is above reproach! She is someone you can depend on to do the best job possible. When volunteering for a task, we can be one hundred percent confident that it will be done on time and to the best of her ability. We appreciate all the time she has invested in the CFWMC and those we serve. Gwen is truly a gem!"

Gwen has the distinction of logging more hours than any other volunteer in our history, ever. She's donated almost 1,900 hours of her time to the CFWMC over the past 5 years. From all of us at the Community Food Warehouse: Thank you for all you do, Gwen! We appreciate you!



Left to right: Gwen sorting potatoes with fellow volunteer Cindy Feigert; Gwen posing for our 35th Anniversary calendar; Gwen dressed as Mrs. Claus with our mascot, Myron, at last year's Sharon Holiday Extravaganza.

INTERN SPOTLIGHT: *Emma Messett*

Emma Messett, our fall intern, came to us through an email. She reached out directly to our ED, Lori, through email and asked if she could complete an internship with us. We called Emma in for an interview the next day and brought her on as an intern just a few days after that.

Emma is a Sharpsville native, and junior at Westminster College, majoring in Business Management and Social Policy. She hopes to take away from this internship a better understanding of food insecurity in her own community. She also hopes to use her experiences, such as meeting clients and hearing their stories at member agencies, to continue her work in the nonprofit sector upon graduation from college.

Emma has a strong passion in food security for all. This combined with her previous experience at Reach Beyond Mission in Austin, Texas, where she spent the summer working on food justice advocacy, made her the perfect fit for the advocacy work she would do here for the Farm Bill. She was able to collect 285 postcards which were delivered to our state legislators, encouraging them to vote for a Farm Bill which supported SNAP eligibility.

Another project that Emma has taken on has been to encourage local elementary schools to get involved in the fight against hunger by holding food drives. Six local schools are participating and the classrooms which collect the most food will be rewarded with a pizza party and visit from our mascot, Myron. At the date of this writing, her food drive totals had reached over 5,000 lbs.!

Mimi, our Agency and Public Relations Manager, said: "We have been so blessed to have Emma work with us. It was no accident that Emma came to us seeking an internship! She came at a time when we needed her most with a skill set to do the job at hand (and then some!), a passion and commitment, and a maturity beyond her years. Thank you, Emma, from the bottom of our hearts!"



Left to right: Emma teaching students at our Farm Day in Town Field Trip; Emma in our Community Room, and Emma dressed as our mascot, Myron, for the Truck-Full of Hope kick-off event.

This year's *Food Drive Champion* encourages other doctors' offices to help the Community Food Warehouse!

Dr. Brian Szabo's wife and staff have been holding a perpetual food drive for about 8 years now. A basket sits in the waiting area of their office for patients to donate food and is picked up monthly by the Community Food Warehouse.

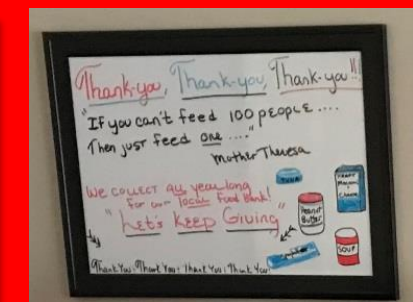
When asked how the doctor's office food drive concept got started, Luann Szabo recounts how many years ago, they were asked to participate in a food drive that Hicks Office Supply was doing around the holidays. "Hicks brought in a very large box decorated in Christmas wrapping paper; it was so large we had to move furniture around in the waiting room!" It was placed by the tree and before long it was filled to overflowing. "We started advertising it by tying little papers with ribbons on them to mailings to the patients asking them to participate when they came in for their appointments, said Luann." "We also reminded patients on appointment reminder phone calls. It was so well supported that the staff decided to continue it on a regular basis all year long. Now they have the food drive reminder printed and highlighted on their "next appointment" cards that patients take with them.

Luann says the response is still strong. One of Dr. Szabo's patients goes throughout her apartment complex reminding her friends that she will be going to her appointment and will be collecting food to take with her! She comes to her appointment with bags full of food. Others have brought in cases of food at times.

When asked what her message would be to other doctors' offices, Luann says, "It's not hard to do. It takes a little bit of thinking forward and preparation, but it can be done. Once it starts, it snowballs. We've even had folks bring in food who are not patients!" Why not help the community? If you have a busy office, once you have the food drive established, people remember".

Thank you, Dr. and Luann Szabo and staff for your creativity, dedication and heart to help others! We salute you as our Food Drive Champions. You have blessed us and others in our community by your support.

Won't you encourage your doctor's office today, to start a food drive?



Left: Luann Szabo (2nd from left), Dr. Szabo (3rd from left), and staff pose for a picture in front of the sign advising their patients of the food drive (pictured above).

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT: *Loaves & Fishes*

Recently, we were able to connect with Sandy Probst, Director of Loaves and Fishes Food pantry. Located in Mercer, PA, Loaves and Fishes was started in March of 1982 as Mercer Community Christian Center.

Loaves and Fishes distributes on the first two Wednesdays of each month to the local community and on the first Thursday to senior citizens participating in the CSFP Program. Rather than waiting in line in the hot sun, rain, or snow and ice, clients who visit this pantry wait in their car until they are right at the door and it is their turn to receive food. Here are some of the questions we asked Sandy to shed light on the service her organization provides:

How many families do you serve a month, on average?

We serve 80 to 100 households each month.

How is the leadership of your organization structured? Are there any groups or organizations that support your operations?

We are an all-volunteer organization and do not have any paid staff. I am the director, my husband Bill is the secretary/treasurer, and Linda Kellogg is the temporary director. She steps in if I am out of town or I am unable to fulfill my duties due to an unforeseen circumstance. We are a registered 501(c) (3) agency, and there are 8 main churches in the area that provide the primary support for Loaves and Fishes. Additionally, the schools, businesses, and charitable organizations here in Mercer support us through food drives and donations. It truly is a community effort.

Unlike a traditional office or church setting, your pantry is in quite a large barn. Can you explain this unique location?

Prior to the barn, Loaves and Fishes was operated out of a rental building. However, the money depleted to continue to pay rent and utilities for this location. Dr. Crawford's wife, Shirley Crawford was a volunteer at the time, and the barn is located on their homestead. In 2000, the Crawford family generously allowed Loaves and Fishes to move into the barn.

How long have you been the director of Loaves and Fishes? What motivates you to serve your community in this way?

Bill and I started volunteering at Loaves and Fishes in 2002, and I have been the director since 2008 which makes this my tenth year. Although our two sons are incredibly supportive of the work Bill and I do, they live out of state. Since we are not able to see them and our grandkids on a regular basis, we choose to keep busy by helping others.

How has being a member agency of the Community Food Warehouse helped you?

I can remember working with Lori and Mimi when there were just three staff members in the old building. When the Senior Food Box Program (CSFP) started, we were the first of your pantries to sign on board. The funding that the CFWMC works hard to offer us at a reasonable price plays a large role in our success. Without the CFWMC, it would not be feasible to purchase our food from retail stores. Additionally, as a gardener, I appreciate the produce that comes from the Warehouse. I often contribute from my own garden as well.



Above: Sandy Probst stands next to the Loaves and Fishes sign. Right: Sandy works inside of the pantry.



THANK YOU!

We would like to thank the following people and organizations for your contributions to the Community Food Warehouse this year- it is because of the generosity of the people of Mercer County that we are able to continue to feed the many hungry people in our communities. (This is by no means a full list and is in no particular order, just a few of the **MANY** special organizations and people who have made this year a great one!)

- Our wonderful Board of Directors
- Community Foundation of Western PA & Eastern OH
- First Presbyterian Church of Sharon
- Greenville Savings Bank
- Nicastro Allstate Insurance
- Terry Day & USW Local Union 1016
- D'onofrio's
- Tony Paglia and PSU Shenango's Ag Club
- UPMC Health Plan
- New Deal Club
- Quota Club of Hermitage
- P.E.O Chapter, CP Hermitage
- Giant Eagle
- Dunkin' Donuts
- Autosoft DMS
- Joe McLaughlin
- Jim Sheasley
- John Williams
- Jim and Karen Zorzi
- Joe and Mary Ann Walsh
- Daffin's Candies
- DJ's Greenhouse
- Drew Palisin
- Eat'n Park Hospitality Group of the Pittsburgh Foundation
- Buhl Community Health Foundation
- Each of our wonderful volunteers
- UPMC Health Plan
- Matt Taylor, owner of Taylor Chevrolet
- Brendan Radcliffe and all staff of Taylor Chevrolet
- Renee Carey and the staff of the Herald for the great coverage of our 35th anniversary
- Valley Voices for the great coverage of our 35th anniversary
- Mike Fleming Plumbing
- Shenango Valley Corvette Club
- Terri Hessman and West Middlesex High School's Service Learning Class
- Sandy Waltenbaugh and Sharon High School's Interact Club
- "Mr. Rodger's Neighbors" volunteer group
- WFMJ for all the great coverage of our 35th anniversary
- WKBN and WYTV for all the great coverage of our 35th anniversary
- Kraynak's
- Sharon Regional Medical Center
- Boaz Fields

We wish you a wonderful holiday season! Thank you for your support this year. Please enjoy a few of our 2018 highlights!

