TASTE of HOPE

September is Hunger Action Month

SECOND HARVEST food bank of East Central Indiana
September is Hunger Action Month and is lifted up across the country through the efforts of Feeding America and the over 200 regional food banks in our network. Collectively, every county in every state is served by a regional food bank in the Feeding America network. I think every month is Hunger Action Month, but I understand this is focused on an awareness campaign on a national scale. The good news is that we are making progress both nationally and locally. During the early years of the Great Recession (2008-09), nationally there were 46 million people and just over 80,000 in East Central Indiana that were struggling to feed their families every day. Today the national number is 41 million and the local number is just under 68,000. This downward trend has been in place every year since the peak time and I expect it to continue to show more progress next year.

As the economy has improved, more jobs have been filled which means less unemployment, all good news. Wage increases have been slow to match the economic growth so we are still in a difficult spot with more people working but not able to meet their bills. Over 30% of all food insecure families have jobs and make too much money for benefits from any of the safety net programs, such as SNAP (food stamps). It’s been said that the “working poor” have just too much month left at the end of their money. According to the Indiana Living Wage Calculator, a single parent home with 1 child needs a wage of $21.82/hr. to meet the average expenses living in Delaware County. It varies slightly by county, but not by much. Hunger Action Month is a call to action toward a battlefield with many fronts and no time to sit and wait.

Have a great fall season,

Tim Kean  President and C.E.O.

Agency Conference

On Friday July 27th we were grateful to host our annual Agency Conference. With over 100 Agencies in 8 counties it can be difficult to know what the needs of each one is. While our communities and food pantries vary in many respects, the one common attribute is the presence of hunger, sometimes where you would least expect it. The Agency Conference allows staff to work with and better understand the agencies that we serve. This is also a chance for agencies to meet other agencies, discuss methods and see the issues that others communities face in East Central Indiana. It is through these kinds of experiences that we learn from others, are able to ask questions and get answers about our common challenges, by creating relationships that offer encouragement and mutual support in our common mission of feeding the hungry.

“The Annual SHFB conference is always a great source for networking, gaining new ideas and feeling very appreciative for time well spent.” – Paula Floyd Gruwell

Agencies from all of over came to ask questions and share experiences
The summer began and ended with discussions on how to earn money. Earning was not only the topic, but the experience. Jobs and career were also imbedded into every week’s conversation. The youth were able to practice what they were learning by applying, interviewing and winning internal jobs to be implemented during our Forward S.T.E.P.S. weekly community meeting. Because each job paid a minimum of $3 in Forward S.T.E.P.S. cash, some of our youth enrichment members chose to apply for more than one job. Winning these positions was based on internal reference checks, behavior, capacity to get along with others and the ability to complete the task assigned. There were 15 different positions available, of which all youth worked a minimum of one job and were paid bi-weekly in “S.T.E.P.S.” cash. Their earnings could be saved in the S.T.E.P.S. bank or used in the S.T.E.P.S. store, stocked with a number of age appropriate items that could be for play or education.

After the youth finished 7 weeks of curriculum they were divided into two teams to further develop the “earn” concept. The youth decided the best way for them to earn money this summer, was to have a lemonade stand. The elder youth created a business plan and the younger youth created signs for the lemonade stand. The lemonade stand took place on August 2, during the First Thursday events in Downtown Muncie. The youth made regular and strawberry lemonade. Each cup of lemonade sold for $0.50 and the total sales were $93.54! After deducting the preliminary expenses, the total profit was $71.97. The youth will use a portion of the money to have an “end of summer celebration.” The remainder of the money will be donated to Second Harvest, during a check presentation.

The climax of this summer’s financial focus was a Youth Career Fair on August 9th. We invited 13 community professionals to help our youth begin thinking more concretely about their future story and what they could be doing now to prepare. Over 25 Forward S.T.E.P.S. youth had an opportunity to interact with adults who were living out their professional dreams as Artists, Academic Advisors, Coordinators, Graphic designers, Engineers, Nurses, Professors, Police Officers, Railroad Electrical Engineers, Social Workers and Therapists.

“Our youth gained a new sense of community, commitment and courage to begin walking toward their future stories.” Sunni Matters, AmeriCorps.

Match Success

We are so excited to announce that our 35th Anniversary Matching Grant Opportunity was over the top! Thanks to a couple of generous organizations, Mutual Bank Charitable Foundation and The Kroger Company, we were able to offer to you a matching grant opportunity for July and August up to $35,000!

Thanks to you, we surpassed the grant and will be able to provide over 280,000 meals to struggling families in East Central Indiana! Some of that food will be delivered in our new trailer we received from a grant through the Ball Brothers Foundation earlier this year.

Thank you for your generosity!

Tim
Recently we had the honor of hosting a visit and tour here at Second Harvest for Ball State University President Geoff Mearns and his wife, Jennifer Mearns. He is the first president of the university to visit our facility. This was a great opportunity to share our current connections with various parts of the university, our desire to deepen these connections and develop new ones that have a longer term design than a semester project or an assignment from a class.

During the summer we welcomed the TeenWorks program into our facility. TeenWorks is an organization with a mission to “empower teens to achieve excellence in college, career, and community.” Through partnering with them, we were able to provide an opportunity in which they were able to experience what it takes to run a non-profit. The focus this summer was working in the warehouse, which is always bustling with activity. From sorting goods to managing our inventory, these individuals were able to tackle it all while earning a well-deserved paycheck. Adding onto this real world experience, the participants will be subject to a mock interview at the end of the program as preparation for their future careers. The skills they have learned here, we hope they will carry with them into a bright future.

This program represents the same hope for tomorrow that we are working towards. Starting with the younger generation to build a stable future, will be key in changing the face of our community for the better.

Do Good Date Night

This summer we hosted our second Do Good Date Night. We brought back all of the activities that we had in the first Do Good Date Night, ax throwing, corn hole, shuffleboard, as well as adding another big one, the shooting gallery. Our shooting gallery featured pellet pistols and made for great competition for the local sharp shooters. Thanks to our awesome volunteers, we were able to sort 4,820 pounds of food! If you missed out please make sure to make it to our third Do Good Date Night on October 26.

BSU Spotlight

Recently we had the honor of hosting a visit and tour here at Second Harvest for Ball State University President Geoff Mearns and his wife, Jennifer Mearns. He is the first president of the university to visit our facility. This was a great opportunity to share our current connections with various parts of the university, our desire to deepen these connections and develop new ones that have a longer term design than a semester project or an assignment from a class.

Visit curhubger.org to get more info on events in your community and how you can join the fight to end food insecurity.