

Sample Article

The Changing Face of Hunger

Michelle, a mother of four has always gotten by on her salary. But when she left work on Friday afternoon, she knew she was going to have to ask for help.

“Two weeks ago I was told by my employer (of the last seven years) that they had to change my position from full-time to part-time. Today they told me in another two weeks I will be laid off. I never thought I’d need this help. I never thought this would happen to me.”

It was the first time she had to seek food assistance. And she is not alone.

As the economy slumps and prices for food and gas soar, there is anywhere between a 15 – 25% increase in the number of people turning to food assistance agencies over last year. The Central Pennsylvania Food Bank continues to pump 1 million pounds of food into the 27 counties it serves every month, but demand continues to grow.

According to Central Pennsylvania Food Bank Executive Director Kendall Hanna, “Hunger is not just a problem for the homeless, the jobless or people living in poverty. Instead, the face of hunger is the single senior citizen living on a fixed income – having to choose between paying for the cost of prescription medication or buying food. It’s the struggling working family whose energy and housing costs are rising. It’s the elementary school child who misses breakfast because he can’t get to school early enough to eat or doesn’t want to be stigmatized for needing a free meal at school.”

“The tight economy has blurred the line between who is needy and who isn’t,” said Hanna. “For those just getting by before gas and utility prices went up, now they cannot make ends meet or they could be dealing with a job loss.” The food bank provides food to more than 500 soup kitchens, shelters, food pantries and other programs throughout its service area.
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Angie and her children have found both friendship and support at a local church food pantry.

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Alfred lives with his fiancé and their two children. “When I came to the church pantry today to get food, our refrigerator had some gatorade and ketchup in it. The freezer has nothing. If it weren’t for this place I don’t know what we’d do.”



“I can’t wait to see the look on my boys’ faces when I get home with hot dogs and can give them a real meal tonight.”

Alfred works construction jobs whenever he can and as much as he can, but it’s inconsistent. They are currently on a waiting list for free/reduced cost daycare. If they could manage the daycare, Alfred’s fiancé could work and add to the income stream.

“I can’t wait to see the look on my boys’ faces when I get home with hot dogs and can give them a real meal tonight,” Alfred said.

In addition to being hit by the cost of diesel to fuel the seven trucks that pick up and deliver food, corporate food donations have dropped, so the Food Bank is in the position of having to purchase more food than ever before.

“All the expenses add up, but the Food Bank is committed to fighting hunger in Central PA regardless,” said Kendall Hanna.

“We’ll incur the costs. That’s our role and our promise to the community.”

If you would like more information about hunger in Central PA or how to get involved, be sure to check out hungerbites.org - a website developed by the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank to support Hunger Action Month in September.