



Spring 2021  
**FOOD**  
— for —  
**THOUGHT**



**Greater Cleveland  
Food Bank**

## A Grateful Heart

*Sandra, client at Vineyard  
Community Church*

**Sandra is  
thankful for  
your kindness  
and compassion  
that puts food  
on her table!**

Sandra enjoyed a long career – 23 years – serving at a federal government office here in Cleveland. So it was hard when her chronic health condition

caused too much pain and difficulty for her to function at work, and she had to retire in 2014.

She knew it would be an adjustment living on disability and not working. What she didn't realize was that her income would be so much less than her previous paycheck ... and yet still "too much" to receive SNAP benefits. It was a pleasant surprise when Sandra learned that she could get healthy food at Vineyard Community Church in Lake County, a Greater Cleveland Food Bank partner.

The food Sandra receives at these distributions is "a great deal of help," and she especially loves the quality of the fresh produce. She says, "My grocery bill has almost been cut in half because I come here, so it's easier for me to make sure that I pay all of my bills. Every little bit helps, you know!"

Sandra also loves the people she has met, saying, "These are all very kindhearted, sociable people. They make me feel great! Anything you need, they can direct you to any other place that could help."

As someone who has received help for a few years now, she offers this advice to families who recently need assistance for the first time. "Go ahead and ask because the products are here, and people are willing to help. You don't need to be ashamed or embarrassed. Your community is here for you."

Sandra is "very, very grateful for the help" and "blessed to live amongst such generosity." To share her gratitude, she volunteers regularly at food distributions, welcoming others with a big smile to brighten their day.

**Thanks to friends like you, Sandra can receive the nourishing food she needs to stay healthy. As more of our neighbors continue to struggle during the pandemic, your generous support provides healthy food while they work to rebuild their lives.**

# Food For Thought

Kristin Warzocha  
President & CEO



**Our strength is  
their strength.**

As the pandemic continues, I am filled with gratitude. One of the things that inspires me daily is the incredible commitment of our more than 1,000 partner programs. They are on the front lines in every neighborhood across our six-county service area – giving food and hope to their neighbors like Sandra, who is on our cover.

And the majority of our partners are run by volunteers who work long hours out of the goodness of their hearts, simply because of their commitment to ensure that nobody in their community goes hungry. People like Bill (page 3) and Quinton (story on back) who give selflessly and cheerfully every week. At the Food Bank, we are forever indebted to this amazing group of people.

I'm also grateful to see neighbors helping neighbors. Time and time again this past year, we've seen clients not only receiving assistance, but taking care of their neighbors. Like Bill, who we met in Parma, who lost his job at a major bank and picked up food for his own family as well as some seniors who live in his neighborhood. Or Kara, whose story is shared below.

One of our priorities moving forward is to help our partner programs serve more people in every neighborhood. In addition to providing more food

than we had pre-pandemic, we're also looking at creative solutions including capacity building

grants to help programs purchase refrigerators and freezers so they can distribute more fresh produce and nutritious proteins. Our strength is their strength.

Ending hunger takes an extraordinary community response. It's not something any one organization can do alone. But, with the help of our partners and generous friends like you – who donate food and money, volunteer and advocate – we can make a difference in the lives of people in our community who don't always know where their next meal is coming from. Thank you for caring ... I am thankful for YOU.

With gratitude,

Kristin Warzocha  
President & CEO

*Kara, client at our Parma High School food distribution.*



## Family of Five Finds New Hope

Kara and her family of five have found themselves like so many other families during this pandemic – in need of help. That's where the Food Bank's food distributions at Parma High School this summer have stepped in.

After her husband's work hours as a CnC machinist were drastically reduced and her children's school went online, Kara found herself needing to take a break from taking classes at Tri-C to help out more at home. But that hasn't been easy.

"The pandemic has affected me and my family greatly. I have issues with depression and anxiety – which have gone up since the pandemic," Kara said.

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# “Lucky to be able to give back”

Bill loves serving others at the Old South Church food pantry.

Bill, Director at Old South Church food pantry



Old South Church in Kirtland has hosted a food pantry for over thirty years. But when Bill took it over eight years ago, he worked hard to turn it into a choice pantry where his hungry neighbors in Kirtland and the surrounding communities could come in and choose their own food.

The pantry partners with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank – using as many resources from the Food Bank as possible to restock their shelves every week. That help has been in even greater demand as the pandemic continues to affect so many people.

"We usually serve 5,000 people a year ... nearly 500 a month. But that has increased about 30% post-COVID-19," Bill says. Health and safety restrictions have altered the way food is chosen at the

pantry. Instead of allowing clients to come inside, clients get an order form when they drive in, and volunteers carry out bags to their cars.

Bill works hard to develop relationships with everyone who visits so they don't feel embarrassed. "Part of our job is to make people not feel 'less than' because they are at a food pantry. I have a 95-year-old lady who still drives and comes in, and she's so sweet. The first time she came in, she was embarrassed, and now she's always smiling. People are very thankful and glad to have the help. It's nice to see their appreciation."

Bill considers himself lucky to be able to give back and help his neighbors in need. "I feel a responsibility to give back ... it's a passion," he says with a chuckle. **"With so many people living paycheck to paycheck, I'm fortunate that I don't have to worry about food or my house. When I ask myself what it is to be a good human being, it's to love your neighbor and help other people."**

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Kara's family is deeply appreciative of the food as food prices have spiked during these hard times and healthy food becomes more and more scarce.

"It's always been hard to make ends meet. These times are even harder," she added.

Accessing these resources for the first time has been key to Kara's family's ability to stay safe and healthy during the pandemic. She explained, "Anything that you guys are giving away is helpful to any family probably in the entire county. Everybody needs help right now."

So many families are newcomers lately. Kara encouraged anyone who needs help to reach out, saying, "I would tell them to not be ashamed at all. I'd tell them that this is what you guys are here for. It's really great that the community can come together and find a way to bring people these services."

She left us with this message to donors: "Thank you very much. The whole community is so thankful. Thank you so very much for providing these services."

# Building Stronger Communities: Quinton's Story

While some men might choose to retire and relax after working in construction for more than 60 years, Quinton is still passionate about helping others. He runs the Durham Construction Trade Institute at the Garden Valley Neighborhood House to care for his neighbors who are struggling.

"We serve anybody who comes to our center who needs food – between 12,000-15,000 people a month. We don't turn anybody away. We also have about 40 programs, and my main focus is on teaching construction of all trades. Many of the students I've taught are in the union now, making a decent salary."

Quinton has seen firsthand how difficult life has been for local people who are struggling due to COVID-19. He says, "We are gaining more clients ... more people are coming. They're not working, but they still have to have food." Garden Valley has had to change their distribution methods to keep everyone safe: "We used to bring them inside, but now we have them line up outside. All they have to do is sit in their car, and we bring food to them."

When asked why he is thankful for the support of generous friends who give to the Food Bank, he shares, "I just want



Quinton, volunteer  
at Garden Valley  
Neighborhood House

people to know that we are down here serving the community. Sometimes it gets tough, but we manage to keep going."

Despite facing health challenges over the past several years, Quinton's commitment remains steadfast, and he is determined to help as long as he can.

He concludes, with a gentle smile, "What keeps me going is the people I'm serving. The best thing you can do is help somebody."

**The best thing  
you can do is  
help somebody.**

**Your generous support shows you feel the same way as Quinton – that you are equally committed to caring for hungry people here in Northeastern Ohio. We will get through this together, stronger than ever, and continue to provide everyone in our community with the nutritious food they need to thrive!**



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