



YEAR THREE REPORT TO OUR COMMUNITY

September 2018

From the Chair

Feed Your Body, Fuel Your Soul, Free Your Mind

Three years ago, we launched Hunger-Free Lancaster County to break down barriers faced by those in need to getting healthy meals for their families. Then, Lancaster was short nearly 6 million meals per year. We wanted to see that meal gap zeroed out.

We haven't gotten there yet, but we have made good progress. Lancaster's food insecurity number when we started was 11.4% (59,280 people). Today that number is down to 52,160 (9.8%), a notable improvement, but the child meal gap is a stubbornly high 15.2%. While our numbers compare favorably to the national statistics (12.9% overall, 17.5% child rate), we are have more work to do.

We've learned a lot over the past three years about the enormous community effort needed to improve food security. We know that it is important to measure meals, food poundage, and distribution, but we also know our communities and struggling neighbors face obstacles beyond food access. We have learned that there is great power in working with people and organizations that are helping struggling neighbors escape poverty and build resilience. And we are excited to do more.

Today we are issuing our third Report to Our Community and announcing our transformation to partner with key local movements like the Coalition to Combat Poverty and more actively support the efforts of the primary social services "hubs" located throughout the county. We will serve Lancaster County as a primary resource for successful food security and nutrition education strategies and be a powerful advocate for better public policy to continue enhancing access to healthy meals and to begin the journey toward ending hunger. And we will need your help.

Mike Brubaker
Chair, Hunger-Free Lancaster County
President and CEO, Blackford Ventures, LLC
Former State Senator and Founder, Pennsylvania Legislative Hunger Caucus



HFLC Accomplishments 2016-2018

Hunger-Free Lancaster County launched in 2016 with more than 30 faith-based, nonprofit, and corporate partners working together to ensure sustainable access to three healthy meals a day for every Lancasterian by 2018.

Today, we are recommitting to this mission, extending our goal through the end of 2020 and supporting the identified collective impact hubs funded by the United Way of Lancaster County, namely the following initiatives directly involved in food security planning and goal-setting:

- Lancaster Coalition to Combat Poverty
- Lancaster County Coalition to End Homelessness
- P-3 Partnership Pathways
- Ephrata Area School District
- Manheim Central School District
- Penn Manor School District
- School District of Lancaster/Washington Elementary School

(uwlanc.org/impactpartners)

We continue our intense commitment to improving not only the number of meals available to those in need but also the quality of those meals and the sustainable ability of Lancaster families to access them. We are pleased to report that Lancaster County's food security landscape continues to improve, with the annual meal gap as of June 30 at 2,225,040, down from the 5,758,622 when we launched:

Lancaster County, PA	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018
Persons in Need	59,280	55,260	52,500	52,160
Overall Meal Gap	10,492,500	9,755,700	9,414,200	8,913,000
Meals from Pounds	3,185,531	3,968,140	4,807,095	4,486,621
Meals from SNAP	140,901	334,406	318,387	315,199
Meals from TEFAP	345,602	399,530	399,530	390,600
Meals from other sources	1,061,844	1,322,713	1,602,365	1,495,540
Total Meals	4,733,878	6,024,789	7,127,377	6,687,960
Remaining Meal Gap	5,758,622	3,730,911	2,286,823	2,225,040



We're building on the improving economy and the many successes we've had over the past three years, summarized here:

FEED YOUR BODY: A FOCUS ON HEALTHY MEALS

Fresh is Best

Our goal is not simply filling bellies; Hunger-Free Lancaster County is committed to ensuring that everyone is able to get healthy meals, food that nourishes them, and builds a healthier future for us all.

In our first year, Hunger-Free Lancaster County reported that the amount of fresh produce, dairy and protein distributed in Lancaster County grew by 28 percent, representing a whopping 1.6 million pounds of wholesome food.

By year two, a record 20% of the food distributed by Lancaster's food pantries consisted of fruits and vegetables - 1.3 million pounds! Families in need throughout the county were able to substitute tasty and nutritious produce for less healthy food items.

To date, we've seen the dramatic reduction of 3.5 million meals over 3 years, or an improvement of about 60% in the meal gap. Although we are very proud of this accomplishment, and that we shared more than 2 million pounds of fresh produce, meat, and dairy in the last year alone, we also know that over 52,000 of our neighbors in Lancaster County still need our help!

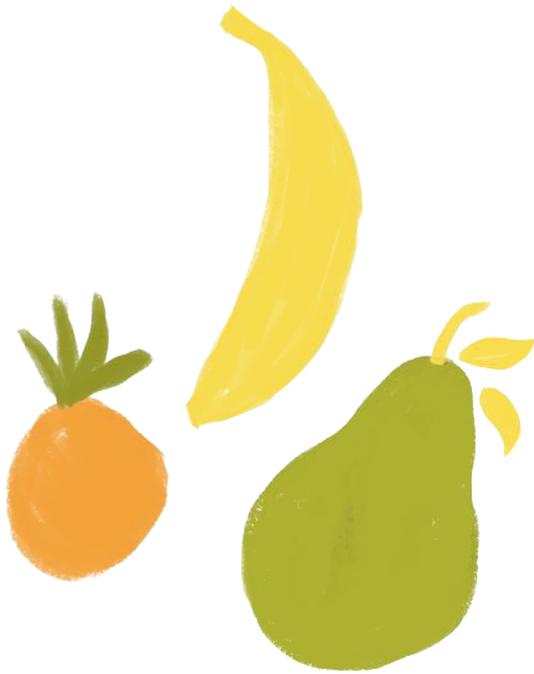
We have to recognize several remarkable statewide and regional innovations that have made it easier to provide fresh produce at a reasonable cost. With the encouragement of **Hunger-Free Pennsylvania, Feeding Pennsylvania** and others, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania began a program in 2015 called the Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System (PASS) which provides funding to help Pennsylvania farmers sell their surplus produce, meat, and dairy products at discounted prices to charitable food organizations for distribution to Pennsylvania families in need. In only its third full year, PASS has sourced and shared 7.2 million pounds of healthy food from 115 farms to 1.2 million families in need in all 67 counties. PASS is a wonderful example of the power of public-private partnerships.

Produce sourced in Lancaster County under PASS

	Pounds	Paid to Farmers	# Farmers
2015 - 2018	1,319,507	\$691,133	16
2018 only	352,673	\$223,897	11

Produce distributed in Lancaster County under PASS

	Pounds	# Agencies
2015 - 2018	264,450	13
2018 only	97,278	9



Another new source for fresh food is a program innovated by Feeding Pennsylvania that purchases surplus fresh produce at the Port of Philadelphia for distribution to 25 food banks in seven states, including Hunger-Free Lancaster County member Central Pennsylvania Food Bank. **The Mid-Atlantic Regional Cooperative (MARC)** allows food banks to share resources on a regional basis to access reasonably priced products in high demand, including imported fruits in the winter and items not frequently donated like grapes, strawberries and the like. Since its inception in July 2017, the MARC has sourced and shared more than 22 million pounds of produce, including over 2.5 million pounds to Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, which helped Hunger-Free Lancaster County increase its volume and variety of produce distributed in Lancaster County.

MARC in Lancaster County since program's inception in 2017

Pounds	Value	Cost to Agencies	Savings to Agencies
365,539	\$62,529	\$18,385	\$43,694



Another innovative program was the brainchild of Hunger-Free Lancaster County partner **Peter's Porch** food pantries which, under the leadership of Wittel Farm's creator, Pastor Matt Lenahan, (see below), began a poultry program in 2017, raising 1,200 chickens from hatchlings to be processed on site, frozen, shipped and stored at the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank. More than 8,000 pounds of delicious and healthy chicken has been distributed to families in need at the three Peter's Porch food pantries at a cost of less than \$0.50 per pound. Pastor Matt saw that nothing went to waste; even the offal was used, donated to the **Pennsylvania Wolf Sanctuary** in Lititz.

Growing Partners

Hunger-Free Lancaster County has a robust agricultural strategy, no surprise given Lancaster's notable farming community. The Lutheran Camping Corporation of Central Pennsylvania established **The Wittel Farm Growing Project** at the Wittel Farm Retreat in Elizabethtown in 2016, dedicated to growing fresh vegetables to donate to nearby charitable food organizations. Using all volunteer labor, in its first year the group harvested 7,500 pounds of produce after cultivating only two acres of land. By year two, the group farmed five acres and added more than 8,000 pounds of healthy vegetables and 500 pounds of venison into the charitable food network with the helping hands of more than 250 volunteers. This year, there are seven acres under till and 12 different crops being raised by more than 600 volunteers.

Hunger-Free Lancaster County believes firmly that in a place like Lancaster County, hunger is a 100% solvable problem and that endeavors like the Wittel Farm Growing Project will inspire other innovators to bring their talents, ideas, and resources to create sustainable food security.

Wittel Farm is always looking for volunteers; **sign up here** if you want to make a difference!



FUEL YOUR SOUL

Gleaning

Hunger-Free Lancaster County continues to look for farm gleaning opportunities as a way to reduce waste and further raise awareness of food insecurity and actively engage the agricultural community in the fight against hunger. Gleaning is a charitable tradition dating back to the Old Testament -- Deuteronomy, Leviticus, and the Book of Ruth. The Bible directs farmers to leave dropped produce and unharvested produce in the corners of their fields for the poor, orphaned, widowed and strangers passing through.

This generous practice continues today, and Hunger-Free Lancaster County is always looking for farmers willing to allow volunteers to glean their fields for produce for Lancaster County's hungry. We follow the gleaning practices recommended by the **Society of St. Andrews**, the preeminent gleaning nonprofit. We'd love to come and glean your fields - contact us!

COMMUNITY MEALS KEEP COMMUNITIES HEALTHY

There are about 55 free community meals - breakfast, lunch, and dinner - served each week to those in need throughout Lancaster County, including 37 in Lancaster City alone. Most are offered at area churches and all are indispensable for many who are unable to make a healthy meal for themselves.

Hunger-Free Lancaster County acts as a critical resource for organizations sponsoring community meals, helping them provide safe and healthy offerings. One way the coalition was able to help hundreds of City residents was its role in re-establishing the two largest weekend community meals. Now hosted by coalition partners **Spanish American Civic Association (SACA)** and the **Salvation Army, Lancaster Corps**, these meals feed about 200 people each weekend.

Hunger-Free Lancaster County makes available the complete list of the county's free and healthy meals, now working closely with the **United Way of Lancaster County's Pennsylvania 2-1-1**.

HOW OUR GARDENS GROW

School and community gardens have been a focus of Hunger-Free Lancaster County; the more people, and especially children, understand where their food comes from, the more likely they are to value fresh produce and other wholesome foods. This year alone, coalition partner **Lancaster General Health** has funded 44 gardens. Its **Heart and Vascular Institute** funded nine raised-bed starter kits (which include lumber, buckets, tools and soil) for non-profits in Lancaster County. LGH also planted window boxes with herbs and vegetables at fellow coalition member **Tec Centro** and have worked with new **Lancaster Behavioral Health Hospital** to integrate gardening into treatment plans for their individuals in residence as well as window boxes with herbs to be used in the cafeteria. LGH has regularly offered free seeds and potting soil at Tec Centro and Community Action Partnerships of Lancaster County.

FREE YOUR MIND

Schools: A Critical Partner in Fighting Hunger

Here is something that should shock you: nearly 20,000 Lancaster children don't know where or when they'll find their next meal. In Lancaster City alone, more than 71% of the district's 11,300 students qualify for free school meals under the federal guidelines.

We know that today's food insecure families, most of them with working parents, need support in ways that might be different than in the past, including at school.

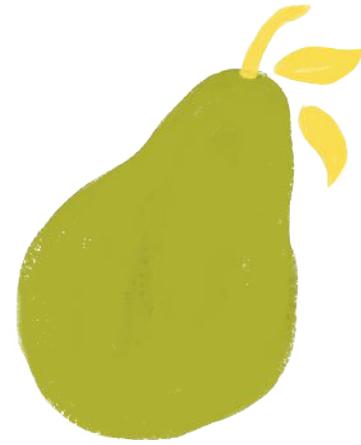
Unfortunately, qualifying and getting are two different stories. While all Lancaster County schools offer free breakfast to eligible students and 13 out of the 16 school districts offer an alternative breakfast model, fewer than half offer it during school hours, meaning most students face significant challenges to actually eating it. Sadly, things like late bus arrivals, long walks, and busy morning schedules keep many kids from getting to school in time to eat breakfast, arguably the most important meal of the day. We know from examples right here in Lancaster that kids who get a healthy meal in the morning do better in school.



Former school principal and Hunger-Free Lancaster County coalition member Dr. Josh Keene knows just how much school breakfast drives student success. When he launched a breakfast after-the-bell program as part of a comprehensive strategy for school improvement at Lincoln Middle School in the School District of Lancaster, he quickly saw attendance improve, a 50% reduction in the suspension rate, and improved student engagement in academics from the start of the school day.

“Once we started breakfast kiosks for all of our students, our school breakfast participation rate increased by more than 200% and we really saw a difference,” says Keene, now the Director of Schools at the School District of Lancaster. “Breakfast after the bell gave our kids the fuel they needed to work hard and stay focused and productive all day. What I really liked, too, was a noticeable sense of school community and improved relationships between students and school staff,” he says.

While the state average is less than 50% breakfast participation for every 100 who participate in school lunch, nearly three-quarters of the Lincoln middle schoolers were eating breakfast every day under Keene’s innovative program. [Click here](#) to watch Josh Keene talk about the benefits of after-the-bell school breakfast.



BREAKFAST MAKES SCHOOL BETTER

Hunger Free Lancaster County knows that **#BreakfastMakesSchoolBetter** (one of our recurring social media campaigns) and has become the evangelist for accessible school meal strategies that work. Simple solutions, such as after-the-bell breakfast for everyone in the classroom, increase participation and reduce the stigma often associated with free school meals. Many schools around the country, including our neighbors in Reading, Harrisburg, and York have made breakfast a part of the school day for all children, garnering an improved learning environment with little loss of instructional time or other negative impacts. In Lancaster, with our abundance, our food resources, and our goodwill, we are making progress but still have a long way to go.

Columbia Borough School District has brought their innovative spirit to high school breakfast! Often a hard-to-reach population to engage in free breakfast programs, Columbia partnered with a local church to provide a patio/outdoor café setting for high schoolers to use at breakfast. When paired with a free coffee bar and staff members visible throughout the breakfast café experience, the high school saw a 10% increase in the number of school breakfasts served in just one year!

Hunger-Free Lancaster County continues to get support for alternative school meals from Governor Wolf and First Lady Frances Wolf and thanks them and Pennsylvania’s Education Secretary Pedro Rivera and many others in the Wolf Administration for their partnership.



SUMMER MEALS CAN OFFER SO MUCH MORE

Washington Elementary School in Lancaster City offers something a little different, a little better with its summer meals. “Books on Break” combines quality summer meals for kids in need and a highly-regarded reading program that keeps kids sharp over school vacation.

Even Pennsylvania Education Secretary Pedro Rivera, the former superintendent at the School District of Lancaster, thinks it’s a hit.

“The Washington Elementary Books on Break program not only provides a much-needed healthy lunch for kids who need one, but also helps students stay on track academically over the summer months, preventing the ‘summer slide.’ The program is a win-win for students and families,” said Education Secretary Pedro A. Rivera.



IN THE SUMMERTIME

For the one in eight Lancaster County children who come from food insecure families, summertime often means the return of hunger pangs. Summer meal programs for children who qualify for free or reduced meals during the school year have become a vital way to help and Hunger-Free Lancaster County serves as a coordinator among the various players offering summer meal programs, including coalition members **PowerPacks Project, Lancaster Rec, Community Action Partnership of Lancaster County, Boys and Girls Club of Lancaster**, and the **Central Pennsylvania Food Bank**.

Last summer more than 20,000 meals were served to kids in need throughout the county. An up-to-date list of summer meal programs and their times and locations can be found on the Hunger-Free Lancaster County **website**.

The Manheim Township School District just completed its third year serving summer meals, seeing growth year over year in the number of kids being served. The district’s three meal sites provided lunches to 4,440 children this summer, averaging 114 kids per day. They pushed the program from four to five days a week this year, too, to make sure their students are eating healthy through the summer months!





AFTER SCHOOL MEALS SPELL SUCCESS

After school meals are another important way of making sure kids have what it takes to be the best students they can be! One of Lancaster’s most innovative is the **Bench Mark Program**, a City nonprofit matching mentors to help propel at-risk youths to successful futures through exercise, academic support, and career counseling. Bench Mark offers healthy after school meals through the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank’s **Kid Café®** program, which serves 5,200 children each week, working with 37 partners at 69 different sites, including 11 in Lancaster (five at City schools -- Reynolds Middle School, Wheatland Middle School, J.P. McCaskey High School, McCaskey East High School, and George Ross Elementary).

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

So many of the barriers to food security arise from lack of knowledge. Hunger-Free Lancaster County spends most of its time building awareness and bringing the tools needed by its partners to educate and empower those in need and those in a position to effect change. Working closely with partner Lancaster General Health and its innovative **Lighten Up Lancaster County** and talented team of nutrition educators, the coalition has successfully launched a number of small, targeted and effective campaigns:

HEART SMARTS This eight-part **Philadelphia Food Trust** program sends nutrition and healthcare specialists into corner stores for to help encourage healthy foods with in-store demos and food tastings, offering “Heart Bucks” to participants which can be used in the store for healthy foods, providing on-site health screenings, and when needed, providing cooling units.

HEALTHY FOOD DRIVE FOOD PANTRIES may not want to turn away donations or waste free food. Unfortunately, many often get donations of almost-expired non-perishable goods, leftovers from people’s cabinets, and unhealthy foods. To help, Hunger-Free Lancaster County, with the expertise of LGH, developed a **Healthy Food Drive Toolkit**, which offers an easy how-to for successful and healthy food drives!

HEALTHY CORNER STORE INITIATIVE In preparation for new SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) regulations issued in 2018, LGH offered free and on-site consulting services to area corner stores and bodegas to help them offer a wider variety of healthy food options.

MENU MAKEOVERS The professional dietitians and nutrition experts at LGH are now helping churches, soup kitchens and food pantries create healthy, low-cost meals, often keeping the “comfort food” flavors and textures that we all love so much! This popular program has now been expanded to include instruction on providing healthy meals for people with chronic disease.

NUTRITION EDUCATION

- Educating children on healthy eating and food preparation is central to the Hunger-Free Lancaster County mission. Last year alone, nutrition educations from CAP had more than 35,000 contacts in county schools, including Ephrata Area School District, Lancaster School District, and Columbia School District and that the program continues to expand.
- Partner Penn State Extension now offers nutrition education programs in 13 public housing complexes in Lancaster City.



KEEPING OUR SAFETY NET STRONG

Lancaster's families in need rely on a number of government programs and our coalition has been successful in improving access to and utilization of them in ways large and small.

SNAP One way to increase healthy food for those in need is to encourage SNAP participation by those eligible for the program, giving them a little more income each month to purchase otherwise costly fresh fruits and vegetables. Hunger-Free Lancaster partner United Way of Lancaster County trains volunteers to conduct SNAP screenings at locations where people who might be eligible may be, including free tax preparation sites, at food pantries, and at WIC clinics.

WIC

- The coalition continues to find ways to encourage pregnant women and women with young children to apply for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) if they are eligible. The assistance can mean the difference between a starchy, salty diet for kids and one with healthier, fresher and more varied food.
- CAP and LGH developed a Farmers Market Nutrition Program Guide to increase the use of fruit and vegetable vouchers.
- CAP's WIC on Wheels mobile clinic nearly doubled the number of participants it was able to see throughout the County to more than 500.
- CAP and LGH have worked to deploy medical professionals at WIC clinics throughout the county in an effort to improve the health of children and their families.

Farmers Market Vouchers Every summer, thanks to an innovative program at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, thousands of vouchers that can be used at participating farmers markets are handed out to WIC recipients and eligible senior citizens, working through the Lancaster County Office of Aging, a Hunger-Free Lancaster County coalition partner.

Caseworthy and COMPASS One of the biggest obstacles faced by families in need is filling out the paperwork required by local, state, and federal assistance programs and managing their information in many different places. Coordination among the many public, healthcare, and social services agencies is often critical to get families the services they may need. Hunger-Free Lancaster County and its partners have been integral in the development, testing, and deployment of several databases designed to streamline human service processes and eliminate the need for repetitive data input by multiple parties. These include Caseworthy, the information system used by all Lancaster County-based organizations, and COMPASS, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's online tool to apply for many of the state's health and human services program and manage benefit information.

OTHER WAYS HUNGER-FREE LANCASTER HELPS



Hunger-Free Lancaster County plays an integral part in several other initiatives, serving as a food security expert and acting as a conduit to the hunger-fighting community. These include:

Setting the Table: Blueprint for a Hunger-Free PA, the ambitious, multi-agency initiative of Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf to provide access to healthy food for all Pennsylvanians;

Lancaster Coalition to Combat Poverty and its **One Good Job Plan**, the innovative strategic plan to cut poverty in half in the City by 2032.



HUNTERS SHARING THE HARVEST

Lancaster private equity firm, **Blackford Ventures**, whose CEO, Mike Brubaker, serves as the Hunger-Free Lancaster chair, is credited with boosting local returns by 30%.

The twist?

The “investment” the firm made by last year was in support of the **Hunters Sharing the Harvest** program, the unique statewide non-profit charity that coordinates the processing and distribution of donated wild game to Pennsylvanians in need.

In 2017, as a result of Blackford’s support, venison donations increased to 13,023 pounds, up from 9,000 pounds of meat the year before.

“Blackford’s exceptional partnership in recognition of our 25th anniversary last year gave us the boost we needed to get the word out and support the participating Lancaster County hunters and deer processors,” says John Plowman, executive director of Hunters Sharing the Harvest.

“We are proud to recognize Blackford for supporting what amounts to nearly 33,000 meals for Lancasterians in need,” he adds.

According the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, an average-sized deer will provide enough highly-nutritious, low-cholesterol meat for 200 4-ounce servings.

