CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NETWORK INVESTMENT INITIATIVE GRANT RECIPIENTS!

INVESTING IN OUR NETWORK’S CAPACITY: CFBNJ Provides Grants to Local Organizations

Earlier this year, the Community FoodBank of New Jersey (CFBNJ)’s Senior Street Friends and Newark selected 292 community partners, including food pantries, soup kitchens, and more, across 18 counties to receive grants through a $3.5 million investment in network capacity. Though these local food assistance organizations are more essential than ever, many of them are struggling financially, as they’ve experienced unexpected and increased expenses due to the pandemic. Awards ranging from $5,000 to $15,000 were given to help these partners expand their capabilities during this time of historic food insecurity by funding additional refrigeration, household and hygiene items for clients, transportation, equipment to enable outdoor distributions, and other critical needs. These grants, which were given in collaboration with the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund’s Endurance Grants program, represent the first round of a larger, multiyear Network Investment Initiative. CFBNJ is also grateful to the Community Foundation of New Jersey for their generous support and partnership in facilitating the grant process.

Blensoor Presbyterians Church in the GreenFood Pantry, a grant recipient in Essex County, has gone from serving about 60 people each month to serving about 500 people each month. The funds from CFBNJ have helped them to pay for winterization expenses, repairs to their kitchen floor, a new freezer, additional driving to pick up donated food, and more. “We expect that the need will stay more or less on this level, which is way beyond what we’d expected,” said Don Connell, Food Pantry Director. “We wouldn’t be able to continue serving this many people without the grant from the FoodBank.”

Approximately 95% of grant applicants reported significant increases in demand for food assistance over the past year, and elevated levels of food insecurity precipitated by COVID-19 may continue after the pandemic has ended.

At the James O. Bryant Food Pantry in Paterson, Passaic County, the grant has increased their capacity so greatly that they can now participate in CFBNJ’s planning direct program, picking up donated food from their local supermarket that they didn’t have enough strength to accept previously. The pantry’s clients have more than doubled since the start of the pandemic, so they have purchased new equipment to allow them to continue providing more food than ever before.

“The grant from the FoodBank, the pantry is giving people nutritious food and making them feel cared for,” said Wilhelmina Bryant, Food Pantry Director. “It’s breaking down barriers, because people who would not have come to a food pantry before are finding the pantry now.”

Continue reading this issue of The FoodFor the more on the grant recipients and the funding partners who have helped to make the Network Investment Initiative possible.
items of note

NJ CELEBRITIES COME OUT FOR HUNGER AT BLUE JEAN BALL

CFBNJ’s annual Blue Jean Ball was a great success! Nearly 400 attendees came together virtually to raise more than $1.3 million as the need in our state remains higher than ever. The highlight of the evening featured pre-recorded performances by New Jersey native Jon Bon Jovi and the Goo Goo Dolls, whogenerously lent their star power to the cause. This year’s FOOD, HELP, and HOPE honorees were Stop & Shop, First Lady Tammy Snyder Murphy and the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund, and CFBNJ’s partners in disaster and pandemic relief.

Thank you to all the attendees, honorees, sponsors, performers, and all who made the event possible!

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REGISTER YOUR STUDENT FOR CFBNJ’S YOUTH PROGRAMS

With school back in session, it’s a good time to get students involved in CFBNJ’s youth programs! Register your school for Students Change Hunger, the friendly food and fund drive competition that starts on September 13. You can also reserve your student’s spot in this year’s Teen Hunger Summit and schedule a workshop to learn more about hunger in New Jersey through fun, hands-on activities. Visit cbnj.org/youth-programs to learn more.

partner spotlight: DELTA DENTAL

Delta Dental is one of the generous corporate partners whose support enabled the first round of our Network Investment Initiative. Their contribution was enough to provide capacity grants for at least 11 organizations contending with heightened need in their communities.

“The pandemic has created a hunger crisis, with more people than ever before relying on food pantries to feed their families,” said Dennis Wilson, president and CEO of Delta Dental of New Jersey. “We are thankful for organizations that help ease this burden, and we are proud to help community partners in their mission.”

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Together with the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund, Mercer Street Friends, Norwascap, generous corporate partners, and donors like you, we are providing much-needed support to allow these local organizations to continue their critical work. And this is just the beginning! Funds provided by the State of New Jersey through the CARES Act will allow us to further build upon this initiative, extending it into a multi-year commitment.

Our community partners have never wavered in their commitment to serve those in need, even in the face of an unprecedented health crisis, just as you’ve never wavered in your support of our shared mission. When you give to CFBNJ, there’s a good chance you’re also helping the food pantry or soup kitchen in your own town – that you know!

Best wishes for a wonderful fall,

Carlos M. Rodriguez President & CEO

FROM CARLOS

At our virtual Blue Jean Ball in May, I welcomed the nearly 400 attendees who joined us from their homes with some big news...but CFBNJ was an on-demand article to distribute a new record number of nutritious meals, one that went above and beyond our goals and projections! Now, having passed the year-end date at the end of June, I’m proud to share with you that we provided enough food for a total of 8.5 million meals.

This milestone, which has exceeded our expectations, could never have been reached without the network of over 1,000 community partners. The small church pantries serving twice as many clients as they’re used to? The retirees dedicating their golden years to feeding families in need? The volunteers running drive-through distributions, making deliveries, and packing bags of food? They are the unsung heroes of the pandemic and the true driving force in the fight against hunger in New Jersey.

Thank you to all the attendees, honorees, sponsors, performers, and all who made the event possible!

Fittingly, we at CFBNJ have doubled up 2021’s “Year of the Network,” a time to celebrate and acknowledge the accomplishments of our community partners, while working to meet their most urgent needs. The Network Investment Initiative, which is the main focus of this issue, was launched this year to address a potential threat to our shared future – that many of our partners lack the resources they need to keep up with rising hunger in their communities.

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In addition to giving funds and time for CFBNJ’s mission, Delta Dental has also made in-kind donations. They’ve provided dental hygiene kits that were especially meaningful to our shelter partners and their clients, as well as reusable tote bags to help community organizations run efficient and eco-friendly distributions.

“Together with caring partners like Delta Dental, I’m proud of what we’ve accomplished through the Network Investment Initiative, providing much-needed support to our network during this time when it was needed most,” said Carlos Rodrigues, President & CEO of the Community FoodBank of New Jersey. “Together, we can end hunger one helping at a time. Hunger Action Month is a time for everyone to unite with the feeding America network of food banks by donating, volunteering, hosting a food drive, contacting local representatives, and spreading the word about need in New Jersey. You can make a difference in the fight against hunger! CFBNJ is in critical need of volunteers to support our mission. Visit cbnj.org/volunteer to sign up.

For more information on how your company can get involved with CFBNJ, please contact Bobby Schehinatz, Senior Director of Corporate Relations and Volunteers, at 908-640-0138 or dschehinatz@cbnj.org.

HELPING HANDS

Robert, John, and Bill are three of our most dedicated volunteers who became friends while helping out at CFBNJ. They come every week to our Hillside warehouse to scoop potatoes, pack emergency food kits, work in the kitchen, and more – assisting in any way that they can. “When you enter from the front of the FoodBank, you know that you’re entering into a different place,” they told us. “There’s a lot of family, mutual respect, camaraderie, fun, and also dedication to accomplishing a good thing.” These three are now retired and donate their time to help feed neighbors in need, while many, many more are helping very hard times, but anyone that can be done to help them is a great thing, they visit.
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HELPING HANDS

Elaine is recently retired from forty years as a cashier at ShopRite, one of CFBNJ’s oldest and most dedicated corporate supporters. Their annual Partners in Caring campaign inspired her to start volunteering to sort food at our Egg Harbor Township location. “Right now, there are a lot of people who are out of work. Many of them worked in the casinos. It’s really tough,” she told us. “It’s been such a blessing to serve people who might otherwise go without.”

“Let’s feed great to volunteers at the Foodbank, knowing that I’m helping somebody,” Elaine said.

With locations in Vineland and Port Norris, Building New Lives, Inc. has been serving South Jersey neighborhoods in need since 2016. The pantry is also a grant recipient through CFBNJ’s Network Investment Initiative, which has used the funds awarded for a renovation of their facility that will help them to better accommodate a choice pantry model - allowing clients to shop as they would at a grocery store. They have also purchased new equipment, including a freezer and a rolling conveyor belt, to increase their capacity to accept and distribute food.

“This opportunity means so much to us,” said Sharon Dobbs, Executive Director. “When we received this grant, we didn’t have any income at all.”

With no money coming in, the pantry precisely relied entirely on donated items and equipment. CFBNJ serves as their sole source of food. Building New Lives, Inc. serves 60 to 80 people per month and also takes a full to half of food to a senior center each week, providing nourishment for about 30struggling residents.

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“We are humbled to provide this vital support so that families across the state can feed their loved ones,” said Dennis Wilson, president and CEO of Delta Dental of New Jersey. “We are thankful for organizations that help ease this burden, and we are grateful that we’ll be able to feed more people with this grant from the Foodbank.”

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Zesty Watermelon Salsa

4 ts lime juice
1 ts sugar
4 cups watermelon (cubed)
1 ts sugar
2 ts cilantro (chiffonade)
2 ts mint leaves (chiffonade)

Combine and serve chilled.

Investing in Our Network’s Capacity: CFBNJ Provides Grants to Local Organizations

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