FOOD DEPOSITORY MISSION AND OVERVIEW

Our Mission

Providing food for hungry people while striving to end hunger in our community.

Hunger in Cook County

Hunger and poverty continue to be pervasive issues throughout the United States. In Cook County, more than 309,600 people (unduplicated numbers) rely on the food provided by the Food Depository, according to the *Hunger in America* study, released in 2001 by America’s Second Harvest. Of these, 36.7% are children 17 years of age or younger, 7.7% are 65 or older, and 21.8% are homeless. The number of households covered by the survey showed that 78.8% have incomes below the official federal poverty level though 31.7% include at least one employed adult.

In the period July 1, 2003-June 30, 2004, there were 2,736,570 individual visits to food pantries supplied by the Food Depository, an increase of 280,006 or 11% over the number of individual visits during the period July 1, 2002-June 30, 2003.

Chicago’s Food Bank

For fiscal year 2003-04, the Food Depository distributed more than 40 million pounds of food through its network of 600 agencies – the equivalent of more than 84,300 meals per day, 365 days a year. Of that amount, 6.7 million pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables were made available through our Produce People Share program, including 1.5 million pounds that were directly distributed via the Producemobile to 20 Chicago Housing Authority and member agency sites. Nearly 4 million pounds of food came from our Food Rescue program. Through this program, refrigerated trucks pick up prepared food from restaurants, hotels, supermarkets, company cafeterias, caterers, food shows, schools and deliver it the same day to soup kitchens and shelters.

Reducing Food Waste

Through product donations, food retailers and manufacturers have a convenient, safe and reliable way to channel food to hungry people that might otherwise be wasted. These are products that would be discarded because of production overruns, labeling errors, changes in marketing direction and so on. The National Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, adopted in 1996, and the Illinois Good Samaritan Act, passed in 1981, provide food donors with protection from liability claims.

All food donated to the Food Depository is inspected, sorted, repacked and labeled for distribution to agencies by volunteers and employees who operate out of the Depository’s food bank and training center on Chicago’s southwest side.
The Member Agencies of the Food Depository

The Food Depository’s 600 member agencies – pantries, shelters, soup kitchens, drug and alcohol dependency treatment clinics, senior living centers, community services organizations, child and adult day care centers – are closely monitored by the Food Depository to ensure that they are meeting health and food distribution standards. The Food Depository provides technical support and training for agency operations, client screening and social welfare referrals.

Loss of food from the Food Depository would adversely affect 91.7% of pantries, 83.2% of soup kitchens and 86.4% of shelters.

Where does the food come from?

Last year, 637 local and national food companies, grocers, food service organizations, produce markets and growers donated food to the Food Depository. These include manufacturers such as Kraft Foods, ConAgra, Sara Lee and the Quaker Oats Company, retailers such as Jewel-Osco and Dominick’s Finer Foods, restaurants, and wholesalers such as South Water Market.

Food drives are sponsored by more than 300 local businesses, professional and community organizations, schools and churches, including Dominick’s Finer Foods/ABC 7, Chicago Public Schools/Chicago Teachers Union, Merchandise Mart Properties, Inc., New Trier High School, Mayor’s Office of Special Events and University of Chicago Graduate School of Business. Last year, food drives brought in more than 702,300 pounds of food and $142,000 – the equivalent of more than 1 million meals.

The Greater Chicago Food Depository is a charter member of America’s Second Harvest, an organization that solicits food from national manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers then makes it available to over 200 member food banks and food rescue organizations throughout the country. Substantial food is also received or purchased using grants from the USDA, FEMA and food box contracts with the City of Chicago. The Food Depository also has a food purchasing plan and maintains strategic alliances with manufacturers to ensure that staples from pasta to peanut butter are always available.

We Need Your Support

Financial support comes from individuals, foundations, corporations and special events. For every dollar donated, the Food Depository distributes enough food for four nutritionally balanced meals. Ninety-three percent of all Greater Chicago Food Depository expenses support food programs, making it one of the most fiscally efficient and responsible charities in the country. You can help us in our mission with financial and food donations, food drive sponsorship, volunteer assistance and by helping to spread the word about the need for food and the work of the Greater Chicago Food Depository.

Volunteers make it possible for the Food Depository to keep its operating costs low and distribute more food to the needy. During the 2003-2004 fiscal year, volunteers donated more than 80,000 hours of personal time to the Food Depository through more than 19,000 visits from volunteers, a 25 percent increase from the year before.

For more information about the Food Depository, including how to volunteer or donate, please call 773-247-3663 or log onto www.chicagosfoodbank.org.