



VOLUNTEER VIEWS & NEWS

REGIONAL FOOD BANK

FEBRUARY 2012

This newsletter is dedicated to the volunteers of the Regional Food Bank. You help us provide much-needed food and other supplies to people in need. Thank you!

Thank You for a Job Well Done



In 2011, you sorted and re-boxed a record **3,173,552 pounds** of food and household items for distribution to our member agencies - up more than 350,000 pounds over 2010. This figure represents 13% of our total annual distribution, which is remarkable. You deserve high praise for this achievement since salvage items require so much handling and care before they can go out the door. Well done, volunteers, well done!

Holiday Hunger Appeal Update

We'd like to extend a very special thank you to everyone that took time out of their busy holiday schedules to volunteer at Crossgates Mall during the **27th Annual Holiday Hunger Appeal**. The Appeal is our largest fundraiser of the year and as a result of your diligent efforts, we raised nearly \$73,000 in mall collections alone - the highest total in the Appeal's history!

Volunteers are the backbone of the Annual Holiday Hunger Appeal. Each dollar raised provides \$10.00 worth of food to help feed hungry people in our region, which is more important than ever as requests for assistance continue to increase in this uncertain

economy. You should be very proud of your efforts collecting donations at the mall. We appreciate your thoughtfulness and hope you will participate again in the 2012 Appeal!



Turkey Trot Totals

We were delighted when proceeds from the Troy Turkey Trot came in at **\$10,303.40**. Thank you to all the hale and hearty people who braved chilly weather to volunteer at this Thanksgiving morning event. Many people will eat because of your participation, and we had fun working alongside you. Gobble, gobble!

Getting to Know You

This month's featured volunteer group is **Congregation Gates of Heaven**.

We have many congregations that volunteer at the Regional Food Bank, supporting the Jewish principle of Tikkun Olam, which means "helping repair the world."

For over a dozen years, members of Congregation Gates of Heaven, based in Schenectady, have been volunteering on a monthly basis at the Regional Food Bank. The ages of the volunteers run from young children through older adults. Truly a family experience.

Through their volunteerism and hard work, members learn about the various food and non-food products we distribute to the agencies we serve.

The Congregation has a Social Action Committee which sponsors their sessions here at the Food Bank as well as a number of other activities. Members also help out at local soup kitchens, prepare holiday meals, mentor kids at the Pleasant Valley and Keane Elementary Schools, and even support the end of genocide in Darfur.

We are extremely grateful for the assistance we receive from Congregation Gates of Heaven and their members. They are an integral component of our volunteer family.

Volunteering Can Make Life Less Taxing

Did you know the IRS recognizes the role of volunteers by allowing deductions for certain expenses associated with service? Here's what the IRS will allow volunteers at nonprofits to deduct from their taxable income:

Car and Transportation Expenses

Volunteers can deduct car and transportation expenses incurred to get back and forth from home to the volunteer site, or to meetings or other locations (such as a special event, or to deliver food to a homebound AIDS patient). Volunteers who drive can choose between deducting actual gas and oil used, or else take a mileage deduction at the rate of 14 cents per mile. Given the high cost of gasoline today, most volunteers are better off keeping track of actual driving expenses. Volunteers can also add in parking fees and tolls. However, volunteers cannot claim general car repair and maintenance expenses, depreciation, registration fees, or the costs of tires or insurance. Those volunteers taking public transportation can deduct subway, bus, or taxi fare.

Travel Expenses

The volunteer can deduct travel expenses, such as airfare and other transport, accommodations, and meals, when performing services away from home. This might include trips to attend a convention or board meeting, taking underprivileged kids on a camping trip, or monitoring environmental destruction. However, there are important limitations: The volunteer cannot gain significant personal pleasure, recreation, or vacation from the travel. And the volunteer must really be working -- tagging along on an outing while performing nominal duties, or even no duties for significant parts of the trip, won't cut it.

Other Out-of-Pocket Expenses

Volunteers may deduct other expenses they incur during the course of their volunteer work. For example, board members might deduct unreimbursed phone, postage, and copying charges associated with preparing for meetings. Volunteers at an animal shelter can deduct the treats they're asked to provide in order to help train dogs during walks. Sunday school teachers can deduct art supplies they bring in.

Uniforms

If you ask volunteers to purchase a uniform -- for example, an apron identifying them as a hospital helper -- they can deduct both the purchase price and any upkeep costs. However, the uniform must not be suitable for everyday use (providing a T-shirt with a logo or asking your theatre ushers to always wear black won't be enough). Also, your organization must require the volunteers to wear the uniforms while performing services.

Limits on Deductions

The following limitations apply to these deductions:

- The organization must be a qualified, IRS-recognized charity. (The Regional Food Bank IS one such charity.)
- In order to take these deductions, volunteers must itemize their deductions on their tax return. (Those who fill out a 1040EZ won't get any benefit.)
- Volunteers cannot double-dip by claiming expenses for which the nonprofit already reimbursed them.
- The expenses must be directly related to the volunteers' work, and incurred only because of that work.
- The expenses can't be personal, for family, or for living items or activities (such as meals for children while they accompany the volunteer to a convention).
- Volunteers must keep reliable written records of the expenses.

Talk to a Tax Professional

This information was provided by VolunteerMatch, which suggests volunteers talk to a tax professional, use a tax preparation software program, or read IRS Publication 526, Charitable Contributions (available under "publications" at www.irs.gov).

mark your calendar!

March 22, 2012	Retirement Celebration for Albany County Executive, Mike Breslin – to benefit the Food Bank NYS Museum 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. \$100 Call 518-786-3691 for information
March 28, 2012	Volunteer Lunch with a St. Patrick's Day Theme Regional Food Bank 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Free! Look for your invitation in March
May 15, 2012	30th Annual Reception for the Regional Food Bank The Century House 5:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. \$50 Look for your invitation in April

Food Drive Champions

We salute Kathy Busch for the fantastic results she and her food drive partners achieved this year. Kathy and her friends at Capital Region Orthopedics, The Endocrine Group (where John Lutz is the manager), and The Albany Gastrointestinal Associates (where Karen Brimmer is the Manager), with help from Maura V. and the Perez children, collected **12,341 pounds of food** in just one January weekend. Outstanding!

Words to Live By

"You are not here merely to make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and to impoverish yourself if you forget the errand."

Woodrow Wilson

Happy Valentine's Day!