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A Rhode Island Community Food Bank Impact Report

Fall 2024



Claudia pauses to share a smile of appreciation alongside her youngest child while on a visit to Jonnycake Center for Hope in Peace Dale.

Nourishment for Claudia's Young Family

Claudia and Raul moved their three children, ages 4, 2, and 3 months to Rhode Island from California a year ago.

Raul is serving our country as a member of the National Guard and provides the sole income for their family. With Raul frequently away, Claudia stays at home with the kids.

With one income and living expenses high, Claudia relies on the Jonnycake Center for

Hope in Peace Dale to supplement the family's groceries. She visits twice a month to stock up on nutritious foods that help her prepare healthy meals for her little ones.

"I love getting the frozen fruit here," Claudia says. "I can make smoothies and even homemade lemonade."

Jonnycake is one of 147 Food Bank member agencies across Rhode Island that help families

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like Claudia and Raul's make ends meet. For many, the high cost of daycare compared to what a second income would bring in, is unsustainable.

The food she receives from the pantry provides a variety of favorite meals for her children. From pasta to fruits and veggies to protein,

Claudia can make delicious, healthy meals that her family genuinely enjoys.



IMPACT: In fiscal year 2024, the Food Bank distributed over 18.3 million pounds of nutritious food to our member agencies, enabling families like Claudia's to have a consistent source of healthy food.

Healthy Habits Helps Stretch Food Budgets



Theresa Beeley, Community Nutrition Coordinator, discusses meal prep with participants of a Healthy Habits workshop at Warwick Public Library.

On a rainy spring day, patrons of the Warwick Public Library braved the weather to attend a Healthy Habits workshop with community nutrition coordinators Theresa Beeley and Layleen Suero.

Healthy Habits, the Food Bank's community nutrition education program, provides educational content that empowers people to eat well on a budget. This workshop, one of many provided at the Warwick Library, focused on meal prep.

“All of the meals we’re demonstrating today are under \$2 per serving,” Theresa shares. “But they also need to be healthy and taste good while being budget friendly.”

Theresa and Layleen show their audience how meal prep can stretch a food budget further. They discuss how to shop and prep full meals for the week, how to prepare and store fresh ingredients for easy use, and how to create healthy freezer meals to pull out in a pinch.

“I wanted to learn how to be more cost efficient when I make meals,” one library patron shares. “These days food is so costly, and I really need to stretch my budget.”

Another attendee shares that she has recently been diagnosed with diabetes and wants to learn how to better manage her condition with nutrition. The Healthy Habits team gave workshop attendees a grocery list for the meals they have demonstrated and explained how to “shop at home” first to avoid overspending.



Learn more about Healthy Habits in this video.



IMPACT: The Healthy Habits team conducts over 100 classes, workshops and demonstrations a year that help our neighbors understand how to eat better on a limited budget.

Healthy, Local Foods for Our Neighbors

In Rhode Island, we have access to an incredible bounty of fresh, healthy, local foods. The Food Bank partners with a variety of farmers, gleaners and growers to ensure that our member agencies can provide these nutritious foods to guests.

“All forms of nutritious foods count,” said Jen Tomassini, Food Bank chief operating officer. “But during the growing season, fresh is best. We’ve formed great partnerships with local farmers and businesses that benefit everyone involved.”



Hope's Harvest

Hope's Harvest volunteers glean surplus produce from local farms, like greens, peppers and squash, which is then sent out to hunger relief agencies including the Food Bank. We've received half a million pounds of gleaned fresh produce from the program since 2019, getting a rich bounty from growers like Four Town Farm and Martinez Farm.

“We live in a country full of abundance,” said Shannon Hickey, assistant director of operations. “There is enough for everyone, and everyone deserves access to fresh, nutritious food. We're so glad to work with the Food Bank to help get it in the hands of those who need it.”

Gotham Greens

Gotham Greens builds and operates sustainable greenhouses across the country, including a location in Providence. Valuing partnerships with

local schools, community organizations and non-profits, Gotham committed to a weekly donation of lettuce to our four Kids Cafe after-school meal programs to provide healthy green salads to children at risk of hunger.

“We're proud that we can support local community programs here in Rhode Island,” said Adam Desmond, Gotham Greens plant manager. “We've loved working with the Food Bank to provide healthy food.”

Wright's Dairy Farm

The Food Bank works closely with family-owned Wright's Dairy Farm in North Smithfield to distribute fresh, local milk. Dairy products are frequently requested by our agencies but pose challenges both in availability and distribution.



Wright's recently received a grant from the US Department of Agriculture to make 500,000 pounds of fresh milk available to the community at a fraction of what it sells for in retail stores. And by delivering directly to our agencies, Wright's has expanded our ability to provide fresh milk across the network.



IMPACT: In FY24, the Food Bank distributed over 4 million pounds of produce through our network, empowering guests to eat more healthfully on a budget.

When Community Outreach Changes Lives



Twenty-three-year-old Jorge was adopted as a child, but unfortunately his new home wasn't stable. When his adoptive mother asked him to leave the home in his teens, Jorge was faced with homelessness and depression.

Jorge slept on friends' couches when he could, but it wasn't reliable. That's when Jorge sought help at Food Bank member agency Better Lives Rhode Island in Providence, and met SNAP Outreach coordinator Ermelinda Flores.

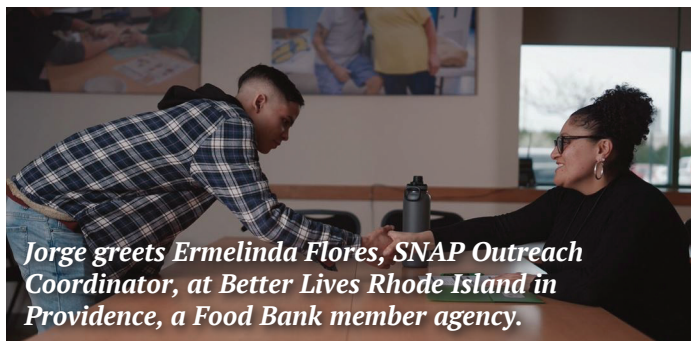
The Food Bank's Community Outreach team works closely with member agencies to provide guests with assistance in accessing crucial benefits. While the team primarily focuses on helping guests apply for SNAP benefits, they understand that no one is just hungry and help guests with a wide range of issues.

Ermelinda's time helping Jorge sign up for SNAP benefits revealed that he needed much more than just groceries. She discovered that he was missing essential documents, like his Social Security number and birth certificate, which

meant he couldn't get a job, and hadn't been able to access essential services like doctors' visits.

"A person going through hard things needs the help," Jorge says. "Ermelinda was there to help."

Ermelinda helped Jorge secure a spot in a shelter, ensuring he had a safe place to stay. With help from Better Lives, he was able to obtain an ID without the fee, which he couldn't afford. With these basic needs taken care of, the momentum started to build, and Jorge started feeling more positive and motivated.



Jorge greets Ermelinda Flores, SNAP Outreach Coordinator, at Better Lives Rhode Island in Providence, a Food Bank member agency.

For now, Jorge uses a bike to get around and Ermelinda is helping him study for his driving permit and GED. Jorge hopes to work in a trade, like carpentry, construction or truck driving. With Ermelinda's support, he's making significant strides towards stability and self-sufficiency.

Together, they demonstrate that with the right support, the future can be filled with possibility.



IMPACT: Our SNAP and Community Outreach staff have helped Rhode Islanders apply for over \$1 million in benefits that otherwise would have been left on the table.



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