



A volunteer practices social distancing while assembling boxes to be filled with food.

May 2020



A small volunteer group fills family food boxes being filled at Midwest Food Bank Bloomington-Normal.



Midwest
FOOD BANK

AROUND THE TABLE

The real heroes

The map below shows the locations that have received Disaster Relief from Midwest Food Bank. At press time, 24 loads have been sent, and we have committed to send 36 more. Each semi-load contains 1,000 family food boxes, providing a family of four with food for 4-5 days. This would not be possible without unselfish donors and volunteers. On behalf of those receiving this relief, we'd like to thank these champions.

COVID-19 giving MFB opportunity to show Christ's love

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, restaurants, hotels, retail stores and small businesses have suspended operations. At press time, over 22 million people have sought jobless benefits. Social service feeding programs have been inundated with people who have never had to request help before.

Midwest Food Bank has remained open and operational, serving over 2,000 partner agencies. Generous donations have helped to cover the cost of certain food items and fuel needed to transport the relief.

In this time of sheltering in place and social distancing, adjustments have been made. Volunteers are still allowed in the warehouses,

but group sizes are limited to 20 or fewer. Hand sanitizer is available and hard surfaces are sanitized frequently. Older and at-risk volunteers have been asked to refrain from volunteering at this time. MFB now assembles pallets of food to distribute to partner agencies. Representatives remain in their vehicles as volunteers load them with food donations.

In addition to normal operations, Midwest Food Bank has been providing Disaster Relief at the request of our partner, The Salvation Army (TSA). Family food boxes are being assembled and shipped by semi to locations specified by TSA (see map, at left). Once there, TSA oversees distribution, and MFB is assured that boxes are immediately given away.

Unlike previous Disaster Relief efforts, these boxes are being shipped all over the USA, rather than to one location. The immediate need means requests are coming at a faster pace. Social distancing measures have also made food box packing a challenge. There is a steady stream of volunteer groups assembling and filling boxes.

"The COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity for Midwest Food Bank to live out our mission of showing the love of Christ," Says Eric Hodel, COO/CFO of MFB.

In addition to the national Disaster Relief MFB is providing, individual MFB divisions are finding ways to reach out and serve in their communities. For details, see inside.

MIDWEST FOOD BANK DISASTER RELIEF LOADS COVID-19



MIDWEST FOOD BANK
LOCATIONS

AMAZING VOLUNTEERS

Thanks to the dedication of Midwest Food Bank volunteers, distribution to partner agencies continues. Despite having fewer volunteers, more food is leaving the warehouse to accommodate the great need. Group leaders have been flexible and creative in leading while social distancing. Volunteers have willingly made face masks and taken on new tasks to keep our warehouses sanitized and safe. On behalf of those we serve,

THANK YOU!



To receive email updates, please visit our website and go to the "News" button. Select "Newsletter" and then choose "eNewsletter." MidwestFoodBank.org

UPDATES FROM MFB LOCATIONS

In working through the COVID-19 crisis, all MFB locations have been doing some similar things: adjusting the operating model, limiting the number of volunteers in the warehouse at one time, changing food distribution methods to accommodate social distancing recommendations, and practicing additional sanitizing efforts. Each division has had opportunities to serve in their own ways

ARIZONA

MFB Arizona has been blessed with volunteer help from the Arizona National Guard. They been packing food and transporting loads, using their own semis and trailers. They made use of their training to make a perilous food delivery to the Navajo Nation, hard hit by the coronavirus.

Farmers are donating produce to MFB Arizona, as restaurants and stores are taking less. One day we accepted 10 semi-loads of fresh lettuce, rescuing it from landfills and getting it to those in need.

Just prior to all of the COVID-19 relief work, a new Executive Director began working here. Join us in welcoming Merilee Baptiste to the MFB Arizona family.

BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL, IL

Most of the Disaster Relief food box filling takes place at MFB Bloomington-Normal. With the size of our facility, multiple small groups are able to work on projects simultaneously at different spots within the building.

Keeping our forklift drivers busy, restaurant vendors are providing an increased amount of donated food. A large part of this is perishable food: produce, dairy, and frozen items.

FLORIDA

Our warmer weather allows us to distribute food outside of the warehouse. Agencies are asked to bring vehicles able to be loaded by forklift and stay in their vehicles. Pallets of pre-selected product are loaded by volunteers.

Scotlynn Group has blessed MFB Florida with the use of two refrigerated semi trailers. These have helped to accommodate extra loads of produce being donated.

Lastly, just prior to the virus-related changes, MFB Florida held its annual fund-raiser. Thank you to the volunteers, sponsors and donors who made our Sharing the Blessings Dinner and Auction in February a success.

GEORGIA

Beginning the week of April 20, Tyson Foods will be providing a semi-load of whole chickens to MFB Georgia among other locations. Six weeks of these deliveries have been scheduled.

We are excited to welcome our new Operations Manager, Gail Frantz. Gail is a long-time part of the MFB Georgia family, volunteering as the leader of our Summer Lunch and School Snack programs, and leader of volunteer groups.

INDIANA

Working with our partner, The Salvation Army, MFB Indiana began assembling and filling food boxes to be distributed by non-profit agencies. Lucas Oil Stadium provided the huge place needed to warehouse the products and assemble and fill the boxes. 10,000 boxes, (480,000 meals) are being distributed each week.

MORTON, IL

The COVID-19 crisis has created an increased demand for Tender Mercies, the packaged meal of rice, beans and chicken-flavored seasoning produced at MFB Morton. Other Midwest Food Bank locations are requesting more of the meals at the requests of their partner agencies. Unable to be assembled by hand at this time, the packing machine is getting a workout. Production is running at three to four times the normal rate.

PEORIA, IL

MFB Peoria is part of a community collaboration named HEAL (Healthy Eating Active Living) that helps those who are shut-in due to COVID-19. People in need call 211 for help, and the United Way and the Tazewell County Health Department coordinate volunteers to deliver food. MFB Peoria provides the food boxes and a bag of fresh produce for the recipients. It's a great example of community services working together to serve.

TEXAS

MFB Texas is focusing a large portion of our efforts on the rural communities in Texas who are served by agencies we supply. An example is Mexia, TX a community of 7,459, with 22% living below the poverty level. There are multiple providers of food with in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. However, little food makes it into the rural communities where the food insecurity level is twice the state average. Limestone County, home to Mexia, has a food insecurity rate of 29.7%.

KAPU AFRICA (MFB EAST AFRICA)

Virus closures causing desperation in Nairobi

COVID-19 has had a major effect on operations at Kapu Africa (MFB East Africa). Kenya is on a national lockdown including a “no excuses” curfew from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. Only essential workers are allowed out of their homes. This is reinforced much more rigidly than anything in the US. To be caught violating the curfew is to risk being beaten by police.

Most of the schools served by Kapu Africa are in Nairobi slums. The children attending these schools normally received two meals per day at school (often the only meals they would have each week). With the schools shut down, desperate people turned to local dumps to scavenge for food. But with restaurants closed, there is no food coming to the dumps. The situation is dire.



At this time, Kapu Africa is supporting five distribution locations outside of the slums. The locations are known only to church representatives who are allowed to drive out and take the food back into the slums.

Kapu Africa has increased its plan for Tender Mercies production and distribution for 2020 from 5 million to 6 million meals.

In addition to the COVID-19 crisis, locust swarms are again plaguing Kenya and surrounding nations. This new generation of swarms is predicted to be 20 times larger than the recent January swarms. This poses an unprecedented threat to millions of people who already experience food insecurity.

Please pray for the people of East Africa. Pray also that Kapu Africa and the churches we serve are able to show Christ's love in this crucial time.



Midwest Food Bank's international operations are working to deal with COVID-19 food shortages.

MFB HAITI

Haiti at risk of widespread, catastrophic famine

In late April, the UN named Haiti as one of ten countries where the food shortages could be catastrophic. Factors contributing to this dire warning include:

- A severe fuel shortage which impedes movement of food.
- Starkly declining remittances from Haitians working abroad, now unemployed due to COVID-19.
- A rampant inflation making food unaffordable for many.
- A reduction in food support from other countries as they grapple with the crisis.
- The recent exit of UN peacekeeping degrades stability and security.
- Many Haitians are on the cusp of starvation already. For instance, eating just four meals a week.

Against this backdrop, we are thankful that MFB was able to get two sea-containers of food into Haiti earlier this year, with 3 additional sea-containers scheduled to arrive in May or June.

Within this crisis, Midwest Food Bank Haiti is working with our faith-based partners to ensure food continues to get to children and will adapt delivery strategies based on evolving conditions.

For example, at the 23 feeding centers near Pignon, food is distributed directly to families instead of served in groups of 50. Distribution of food at our partner Matthew 28 ministry will likely change from pick up by 23 groups on the 22nd of each month to random dates to thwart hijacking and theft of food.

Please join us in praying for the people of Haiti as food security deteriorates, and that God may use MFB to alleviate suffering in Haiti.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

PRAY 

FOR THOSE STRUGGLING WITH FOOD INSECURITY.

THAT MFB CAN SHOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST IN OUR ACTIONS.

 **DONATE**

IN TIMES OF DISASTER RELIEF, FINANCIAL DONATIONS GIVE MFB FLEXIBILITY TO RESPOND QUICKLY.

99¢ OF EVERY DOLLAR DONATED FEEDS HUNGRY PEOPLE



Midwest Food Bank

2031 Warehouse Road
Normal, IL 61761

**PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
BLOOMINGTON, IL
PERMIT NO 148**

“The greatest lesson you might ever learn in this life is this: It is not about you.” -Shannon Alder

CONNECT



ENGAGE

Contact your local Midwest Food Bank to learn more about our volunteer opportunities.

SUPPORT

We are thankful for your support in prayer. If you are led to contribute financially, we have enclosed an envelope for your convenience. On behalf of those we serve, thank you.

New MFB location planned in Pennsylvania

With plans to serve Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York, a new Midwest Food Bank division will open in the Hershey, Pennsylvania area.

“In Pennsylvania, 1 in 8 households are food insecure,” says David Kieser, CEO and President of Midwest Food Bank. “It is our hope to show the love of Christ to those in need in that area.”

The Pennsylvania Division will be the ninth domestic location for Midwest Food Bank. The warehouse will be strategically located to also serve New Jersey and New York, aligning with MFB’s existing remote distribution in New York City.

Jason and Aleta Serrano have been the driving force behind this division. They attend Times Square Church (TSC) in New York City. In 2012, just prior to Hurricane Sandy, TSC started an initiative called Feed New York. It was intended to be a one-year outreach, but has continued, and today Feed New York supports about 100 churches with feeding programs.

While looking for ways to make donations and money go as far as possible, Jason learned about MFB. He and Aleta visited the Bloomington-Normal location. “We were shocked that a food bank could be operated this way,” says Jason.

“The level of professionalism is incredible. It rivals commercial-grade warehouses.”

The couple started to investigate how they could make an East Coast location of MFB a reality. They’ve spent the last three years talking to people about it. They knew God had a plan for this ministry that was imprinted on their hearts.

COVID-19 has given Jason and Aleta the drive to make sure something happens to support the people their ministry serves for the long term. “God has called us to do this,” says Jason. “We are just happy MFB exists.”

Jason and Aleta are working with a team to find a location for a warehouse. Lord willing, MFB Pennsylvania will be operational this summer.



Aleta at a Feed New York distribution.