When you arrive at the Clay County Emergency Food Pantry, you may wonder how one little building can provide assistance to so many. All doubts are shattered when you walk through the doors! Immediately greeted and welcomed by volunteers, you instantly feel the energy of the staff as they bounce from room to room preparing food, clothes, and hygiene items for patrons. A well-oiled machine, this pantry makes the most of every inch of space and nothing is ever wasted. At the center of all of this, you will find Mike Robinson, giving a welcoming smile and sharing an encouraging word.

When Mike retired in 2015, he had a bucket list of things that he wanted to do — one important item on that list was to volunteer. Mike’s journey with the Clay County Emergency Food Pantry began two years earlier, in 2013, when he was Chairman of the Knights of Columbus Mobile Food Pantry in Brazil and was introduced to the work done by Catholic Charities.

It didn’t take long for Mike to develop a passion for those he was serving and it became his mission to feed as many members of his community as he could.

As he began crossing items off of his bucket list, Mike was led to the Clay County Emergency Food Pantry in Brazil. He had driven by many times, but had no clear idea about what went on in that little building on the corner. Mike quickly learned that the little building did much more than simply provide meals. In addition to feeding the hungry of Clay County five days a week, the group also clothes adults, children, and infants whenever possible. They seek to provide cooking utensils, dishes and toiletry items to patrons along with toys, reading materials, and shoes. Mike shares that he felt a calling from God, telling him that this was where he was meant to be.

Mike started out by volunteering a few days each week and, like many of his...
A Word from the Agency Director

Dear Friends,

Lately we’ve been getting ready for a change. In fact, you could say we’ve been hungry for a change for quite some time. On April 29, we will be hosting a ribbon cutting ceremony and blessing of the new Terre Haute Catholic Charities Foodbank. For a little more than seven years, we have been engaged in an effort to raise funds and identify a new location for a facility that would allow us to better serve our member agencies and feed more families, adults, and children in our communities.

Challenging doesn’t do justice to the ups and downs that come with a capital campaign. Perhaps part of the struggle was necessary, if for no other reason, to serve as a reminder of the struggles that food-insecure individuals in our community often times have to endure. West central Indiana has a strong sense of making good on their commitment to helping those who are the most vulnerable among us by supporting our effort to feed the hungry. We are so very grateful for the measure of generosity and compassion expressed by this support and act of kindness.

Our new facility has many features that will help us be more efficient such as a loading dock for inbound deliveries and two ground level docks that are under roof for loading outbound agencies. Perhaps the most significant result is more capacity. We will have effectively increased our dry and refrigerated storage by three and a half times our current capacity!

Our thanks goes out to the staff and volunteers for their loyalty, trust, and prayers throughout this process as well as to our member agencies — food pantries, soup kitchens, and seasonal feeding sites; that have demonstrated through their actions and words what it means to be real partners in this fight against hunger. Our mission is to feed hungry people in our communities, but we cannot do it alone. This campaign and construction project are proof of what can be accomplished when we all work together.

When we talk about partners in our effort to end hunger in our communities, we have to include both our local partners as well as Feeding America — the national food bank network. This issue of Serving the Hungry includes an article about local volunteer Mike Robinson, and his mission to feed the hungry through the Clay County Emergency Food Pantry. You will also find the post 3 Devastating Effects of Hunger on the Body written by Tori Waite and published on FeedingAmerica.org/hunger-blog. Sometimes invisible, these effects go beyond those typically thought of due to extreme malnutrition, but which are still quite devastating. Please take the time to read both of these articles to learn more about the good work our partners are accomplishing.

Thank you for partnering with us to create hope for hungry individuals in our communities. May you receive many blessings.


John C. Etling
Agency Director

Bring the whole tithe in the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and try me in this, says the Lord of hosts: Shall I not open for you the floodgates of heaven, to pour down blessing upon you without measure? - Malachi 3:10
3 Devastating Effects of Hunger on the Body
by Tori Waite, February 6, 2019

A bulging stomach. A boney frame. That’s what many people imagine when they think about the impact of hunger on the body. And it’s true, extreme hunger and malnourishment can have that effect.

Yet, hunger can also affect the mind and body in ways that are less visible but are just as devastating for the 40 million Americans facing hunger today.

1. Hunger Affects Your Mental Health
Facing hunger can be stressful. Constantly worrying about where your next meal will come from can cause mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The American Academy of Pediatrics revealed that mothers with school-aged children who face severe hunger are 56.2% more likely to have PTSD and 53.1% more likely to have severe depression. The inability to feed your loved ones can have traumatic effects on a person’s mental health.

2. Hunger Affects Your School Performance
It’s hard to concentrate in school when you’re hungry. Roaring stomachs cause children to be cranky, hyperactive, and aggressive. These behavioral issues can distract kids from their school work, leading to developmental delays and learning disabilities. Fifty percent of children facing hunger will need to repeat a grade. And the signs that a child is struggling with hunger can often be hard to spot.

3. Hunger Increases Your Risk of Chronic Diseases
According to the USDA, there is a strong connection between hunger and chronic diseases like high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes. In fact, 58% of the households that receive food from the Feeding America network have one member with high blood pressure. And 33% have a member with diabetes.

We’ve all rushed out of the house without eating breakfast. And when 10 o’clock rolls around and your coffee cup is empty, focusing becomes difficult and your stomach starts voicing its opinion … yet it’s too early for lunch!

But many Americans aren’t just skipping breakfast. And the more meals they miss, the more severe hunger affects their minds and bodies.

If you’d like to learn more about how hunger affects people around the country and within your community, check out www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-blog.
fellow volunteers, he quickly became drawn to the pantry, the many people it serves, and the staff. These close-knit volunteers are truly a family and before he knew it, Mike was working seven days a week! He found the more he interacted with patrons of the pantry, the stronger his desire to help people who had fallen on hard times.

In 2016, Mike was asked to be the CEO of the Clay County Emergency Food Pantry, a role he continues in today. Weekly, he travels to Terre Haute where he picks up food from the Terre Haute Catholic Charities Foodbank.

Because of Catholic Charities, the food they provide, and the money they save the pantry, we are able to pay our utilities, insurance, etc. We are able to be open five days a week and feed over 3,300 families a year. Catholic Charities is the cement of our pantry. -- Mike

After receiving help, many families will return to the pantry to give back. Be it a modest monetary donation, items, or simply a ‘Thank You,’ Mike says that it is a priceless gift to both him and to the volunteers who strive to make sure that the little building on the corner is ready to serve its community.

The Clay County Emergency Food Pantry operates
Monday through Friday from 9am to Noon
506 E Pinckley St, Brazil
For more information or to volunteer, please call (812) 232-1447

Front row left to right: Sandy Black, Rita Hood, Paula Booker, Jean Shoemaker, Mary Jane Willoughby, Arlene Tribble, Corrine Scully
Back row left to right: Sonny Zurcher, Mike Robinson

Saturday May 11, 2019
Fill a bag with non-perishable food and leave it by your mailbox by 9:00am on Saturday, May 11. Your letter carrier and Terre Haute Catholic Charities Foodbank will make sure it gets to people in need in our communities.

Recommended Items:
• Peanut Butter
• Jelly
• Hearty Soups
• Canned Tuna
• Canned Chicken
• Canned Fruit in Juice
• 100% Fruit Juice
• Canned Vegetables
• Grains
• Whole Grain Cereal
• Iron-rich Cereal

*no glass containers

Need Help Finding Food?
If you need help finding food or know someone who does, call the National Hunger Hotline at 1-866-3-HUNGRY (1-866-348-6479). The Hunger Hotline is available Monday – Friday from 9am – 6pm. All calls are free and confidential. Help someone you know receive the nutrition they need to remain healthy and productive.