The need for food actually increases in the summer months. For many children, the end of the school year also means the end of a guaranteed meal each day. Child care costs increase for working parents and keeping cool increases utility bills for seniors and others. Non-profit agencies (and increasingly, schools and government agencies) step up to the plate by expanding their programs—especially those aimed at keeping kids fed, despite the fact that support often wanes during the summer.

The Terre Haute Catholic Charities Foodbank experiences a drop-off in food drives, financial donations and volunteers during the summer. This year is no exception. In fact, things are a little tighter this year due to some unexpected challenges. We have seen an increase in the number of people requesting food assistance and this has required that we access more nutritious food in order to serve. The BackPack program that we introduced in 2010 is now serving 1,100 children each weekend.

It is our hope that you can help us out this summer. If your garden is plentiful or you’ve been blessed to have your basic needs met and have an abundance, we ask that you consider sharing those gifts with those who have nothing. You can drop off your food donation at the Foodbank or call us to volunteer for our mobile pantry program or help out in our warehouse. And if you can, please send a financial donation to help us keep our efforts going and obtain more fresh produce for our partners.

Through June we’ve distributed 1.25 million pounds of food which is down 3% from last year. Hunger doesn’t take a summer vacation. We need your help to keep the food moving.

Thank you.

John Cottle
She told us her husband had been out of work for several months, and in spite of his best efforts to look for full-time employment, they were losing hope. She was scared and finally said with despair in her voice they just didn’t have the means to purchase enough food to feed the family. We referred her to our food pantry program and set up an appointment for her to review some paperwork and receive assistance.

In addition to food for her family, this mother also needed to find a pair of shoes for her 6-year-old son. The pair he had been wearing were too small and hurt his feet so badly that he had stopped wearing them except when required to at school.

The Foodbank staff put together an emergency food basket to meet the dietary needs of her son and called the Clothes Closet at the Bethany House Annex to find a pair of shoes. One of the most often repeated moments in our programs is that when a need presents itself, we have a matching item for it. The Clothes Closet staff informed us that they just received a brand new pair of shoes in the size our client needed for her son.

When the woman and her son arrived to pick up their food basket, she put the pair of shoes on her son and they were a perfect fit. His face lit up and he began running and jumping all around the office. To see someone so excited over a new pair of shoes and what it meant to his mother was priceless. We felt very humbled that day and her response of appreciation was precious to us all. Tears of joy filled the eyes of the entire staff that day.

One week later, we received the following thank you note: “Thanks so much for all the food and the shoes for my son. I picked up my husband from work and we went home and it was like Christmas going through the boxes of food and putting everything away! We just wanted to say thank you again for helping us in our time of need! ☺”

It is ironic how we measure what we do in terms of units of service or pounds of food or meals served to the poor. I must confess, and I think it is something we all must admit, that when we help someone, there is a chance we too get something out of it as well.

The extended downturn in our economy has put greater pressures on family budgets, causing more families to look for help to supplement their nutritional needs. The Mobile Pantry is able to reach those individuals and families that may not otherwise have the resources to drive to the nearest grocery store.

Since December 2009, we have delivered more than a half million pounds of food through 11 Mobile Pantries operating across our entire service area. Our goal is to double that amount by the end of 2013.

Success of this program is not measured by numbers alone, but by the ways families are impacted. A gentleman from Sullivan County comes to the Mobile Pantry on his way home from work. He and his wife take care of seven of their children and grandchildren. The food they receive from the Mobile Pantry allows them to provide the nutritious food the children need while allowing a little extra money to be spent on his wife’s medication.
Summer Isn’t Fun When You Are Hungry

Based on survey data, 90% or more of the children who attend Ryves Youth Center live at or below the federal poverty level. During a normal school day, these children receive free breakfast and lunch at school and supper at the Youth Center. But when school is out, many of these children do not have access to adequate amounts of nutritious food to promote proper health and development.

When asked about the program, 8-year-old Bailey says, “I like the milk and juices and soups we get in the ‘Goodie Bags.’ Most of the time we don’t have enough food at home and it’s easy to fix these foods.” Stella, who is 14 years old, says that she likes “soup and milk the best.” Each bag is supplied with shelf stable milk and although it is costly, it helps each child nutritionally.

Without the meals and BackPacks from the Youth Center, it is clear many children would suffer. Because school is out and many of the children cannot get to a summer feeding site on their own for lunch, the Youth Center sees a significant increase in the number of BackPacks given out each Friday. An average of 50% more BackPacks were given out each Friday in June versus during the month of May. Since January 1, Ryves Youth Center has provided 1,643 BackPacks. It is clear that food insecurity is a problem that is increasing in our community and the Ryves Youth Center BackPack Program helps combat this problem.

Ryves Youth Center in Terre Haute is a member agency of Terre Haute Catholic Charities Foodbank. In addition to providing after-school snacks and evening meals, Ryves participates in the BackPack program by supplying children in need with a bag of child-friendly food each Friday afternoon.

BackPack Story

For the past seven years we have enjoyed a partnership with the Sodexo Food Service Corporation. This summer, this partnership will provide more than 100,000 pounds of nutritious food, enough to serve over 76,000 meals.

Children can eat a nutritious meal at one of 20 different locations throughout our seven counties. It is because of our member agencies that provide these child feeding locations that we are able to reach the nearly 13,500 food-insecure children in our communities.

In the summer of 2011, through the help of our partners and a grant from Sodexo Food Service Corporation, we were able to help serve more than 65,000 meals.

Every year, we depend on our member agencies and those volunteers to lend a helping hand in preparing these meals and serving the children as they arrive – no child is ever turned away. The food provided through the Sodexo grant enables those pantries to significantly reduce their costs of feeding each child a healthy meal while providing the nutrition they need to remain healthy and active.
In order to help minimize food spoilage and thereby food waste, we started what is now known as the Bread and Produce Market. The Bread and Produce Market operates every month on the third Saturday from 9 am to 11 am. Since November of 2010, this program has helped more than 3,000 families – that’s more than 10,000 people.

To build on the program, we initiated Deli Days with the Bethany House Soup Kitchen twice a week. Since we receive donations of perishable breads, baked goods, and produce which are nearing their expiration dates, there is an emphasis on a quick distribution to get these to the hungry families more quickly.

Both money and food can run low for families toward the end of the month. These programs allow us to provide food for their families when their supplies run low. Along with the perishable items, we also offer frozen meats and entrees, crackers and soups, and various dairy items when available.

Since it began, Deli Days has served over 250,000 pounds of food or nearly 200,000 meals. The Bread and Produce Market has served in excess of 75,000 pounds of food and drinks, which is about 58,000 meals.

Without the donations and volunteers from various organizations and community partners, we could not help the number of people who come through our doors.

**Marine Corps League Grant**

In an effort to help provide more food to hungry individuals in west central Indiana, the Marine Corps League Joseph A. Bray Detachment #471 made a $35,000 donation to the Foodbank. The money will be divided among each of the counties within our service area to provide enough food for approximately 20,000 meals in each county. Commandant Henry Shattuck described the donation as a way of helping people, especially children, receive the nutrition they need during these tough economic times.

*Left to Right: John Etling, Agency Director Catholic Charities in Terre Haute; Commandant Henry Shattuck, Marine Corps League; Catholic Charities Advisory Council Member Mary Lou Albert; Marine Corps League members Mike Davis and Scott Buchholz; Marine Corps League Auxiliary member Becky Steadman; Marine Corps League member Ted Higginbothan; and Foodbank Director Tom Kuhl*