

# The Northern Voice

Volume 3, Issue 1, May 2024



Welcome to this edition of *The Northern Voice*, the newsletter of the Fields of Justice collaborative. Fields of Justice includes individuals and representatives of parish families in the northern part of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. We hope you'll join us as we explore the justice issues facing our region, our country, and our world, and seek ways to address these issues with prayer, information, and action.

## May's Focus: Food Insecurity

Access to affordable nutritious food is, sadly, not always guaranteed. This is an unfortunate reality for millions of Americans who grapple with food insecurity. We'll examine the issue of food insecurity and explore ways to promote food access and food security in west-central Ohio.

### **What Is Food Insecurity?**

Food insecurity is defined by the USDA as "a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food." It's often discussed on a scale, with households ranging from high levels of food security to very low food security.

Food insecure households are considered to have:

Low food security—Reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake.

Very low food security—Reports of multiple occasions of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.

Research indicates that 54 million Americans are food insecure. Food insecurity not only damages an individual's physical health, but also negatively affects mental well-being and undermines the socioeconomic stability of communities by perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

For many of our neighbors, the physical location of their home or their experiences with homelessness impact their level of food insecurity. Food deserts are commonly studied and often easily identified. A new term, Food Swamp, is one more way to identify geographical areas of food insecurity.

### **What Is a Food Desert?**

Food deserts refer to regions, usually low-income, that lack access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food due to a lack of availability. These food insecure communities lack grocery stores, farmers' markets, and other healthy food providers, often leaving citizens miles away from nutritious food options.

### **What Is a Food Swamp?**

A food swamp also denotes areas that are food insecure, but refers specifically to places where unhealthy foods like fast food are more readily available than healthy food options. Food swamps contribute to a range of health issues, including obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic conditions, exacerbating health disparities and economic burdens in vulnerable communities.

*(provided by Catholic Charities of Terre Haute, Indiana)*

### **How to Combat Food Insecurity**

Individuals and organizations can help reduce food insecurity in their local communities by:

Donating to and volunteering at local food banks: Foodbanks are critical resources for food insecure households and the pantries and soup kitchens that serve them.

Educating your community: Spreading awareness about food insecurity and food assistance programs like SNAP can help community members engage in advocacy or access needed support.

Learn more about Fields of Justice and its work by contacting one of our co-chairs, Judy Zimmerman (670 Plum Ridge Trail, Sidney 45365; 937/638-2733) or Bonnie Banks (154 W. Parkwood Street, Sidney 45365; 937/492-7564).

## What Can We Do?

### 1. Pray, as individuals and parish families.

Sharing the loaves and fishes, You gave us an image of solidarity with the hungry, O Lord.

Sharing yourself in the bread and wine, You called all to the table, O Lord.

Give me the hunger to be a part of the feeding and the healing of this world.

Nourish me with your Grace, so I may work with joy to serve your children.

Open my eyes and my heart to recognize those in poverty

And increase my awareness of the structures and systems that need to be changed

So we may all break bread together. In your name we pray for the end of hunger.-- Education for Justice

### 2. Learn. *Discover these websites for more information!*

uscgb.org (search hunger)

Bread.org



### 3. Act.

Join gardeners across the Northern part of the Archdiocese as they Plant a Row for the Hungry!

The concept is very simple:

1. Plant a row or even a few extra plants in your garden.

2. When the produce is ready, take it to your local food pantry for distribution to people in need in our county.

3. Hungry people have the opportunity to eat fresh, nutritious food!

PANTRIES PARTICIPATING IN PLANT A ROW:

We strongly encourage you to call the food pantry before you drop off your first donation.

Bellefontaine—Lutheran Community Services; 937/592-9914

Bellefontaine—St. Vincent de Paul; 937/210-1280

Celina—CALL Food Pantry; 419/586-3574

Jackson Center—Fish Pond Food Pantry; 937/596-5463

Sidney—Agape; 937/498-4368

Sidney—Holy Angels Church Soup Kitchen, 937/638-2733

St. Marys—Agape; 419/394-8700

Wapakoneta—God's Storehouse; 419/738-7456

Wapakoneta—Mercy Unlimited; 419/738-3161

If you know of a food pantry not on this list, feel free to contact the organization directly to inquire about whether it would accept your donations.

#### TIPS FOR DONATING TO LOCAL FOOD PANTRIES:

\*If you have a large amount of produce, please call in advance to let the food bank know that you are coming. \*No rotten produce—if you can't eat it, others cannot eat it! \*Offer only good quality, freshly-picked produce to food pantries. \*Handle fresh fruits and vegetables safely to minimize the risk of food-borne illness. \*Don't mix produce types. Keep each type in separate, clean containers or bags. \*Clean as much mud and dirt as possible off of the produce you plan to donate. \*Choose produce without mold, spoilage, bruising, or insects.

*"Freedom from the yoke of hunger is the first concrete manifestation of that right to life which, although solemnly proclaimed, often remains far from being effectively implemented."*

-- Pope Benedict XVI, World Food Day 2011



Catholic disciples in mission are called to put Two Feet of Love in Action! This tool describes two distinct but complementary ways we can put the Gospel in action in response to God's love: social justice and charitable works.

Social Justice: We step with this foot when we work to address the root causes of problems facing our communities by advocating for just public policies and helping change the social structures that contribute to suffering and injustice at home and around the world.

Charitable Works are our "response to immediate needs and specific situations: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for and healing the sick, visiting those in prison, etc." We step with the Charitable Works foot when we assist others locally and globally to meet their immediate, short-term needs. Examples include providing food, clothing, shelter, or monetary assistance to help those in need. (from the US Bishops)

How do we in the Northern Area put both feet into action for our brothers and sisters?