

Your Impact

2020 Potlatch Newsletter

FOOD BANK
of ALASKA



Feeding Alaskans, Together

It was stunning how quickly many of our fellow Alaskans lost income they counted on for necessities, including groceries, as employers were required to shut down or reduce staff when the COVID-19 pandemic began in March. Food Bank of Alaska's 32 staff quickly mobilized to scale up operations to meet the estimated 75% increase in need for food assistance statewide.

YOU – our advocates, donors and volunteers – came together in support of your neighbors in need and helped us distribute an estimated 714,200 pounds of additional food or almost **600,000 more meals from March through June 2020** to assist Alaskans. We continue to provide food to our 150 partner agencies located in over 60 communities and have collaborated with 25 new rural partners.

In providing this food we found we needed more storage space for the extra food we purchased as well as space to prepare food orders to ship to our partners in rural Alaska. We needed to be able to process and ship multiple orders at once so we could respond to the new need while ensuring that our ongoing federal programs, such as The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), summer meals for children, and food boxes for seniors (over 2,000 boxes each month), continued.

We were able to accomplish all of these activities thanks to Walmart's generous donation of additional warehouse space at the old Sam's Club in the Tikahtnu Commons. Here we were able to increase our food distribution where volunteers built thousands of food

boxes to load into the back seats and trunks of people's cars. Our new drive-through emergency food box distribution opened up in April and allowed us to serve over 1,000 families weekly during the initial month of our response. Your support has allowed us to build and distribute boxes to more than 6,000 families and counting in Anchorage.

More Alaskans and their families will continue to need food assistance as a result of the pandemic. Feeding

America's Map the Meal Gap projects that Alaska's 2020 food assistance rate will be 18.6%, a 44% increase from January 2020, with more than 137,264 food insecure people, among them an estimated 51,762 children. We continue to see a 100% increase in families visiting our Mobile Food Pantries in Anchorage and a 200% increase in children receiving meals at our 24 rural summer meal sites.

While food banks have historically existed to rescue and distribute food across communities, the pandemic has required us to update our model to include significant food purchases. The costs of purchasing food are considerably greater than the costs to rescue it, but your generous support has provided vital resources to meet the increased need of children, families, seniors, and veterans.

Thousands across our state have become food insecure for the first time in their lives. While we are living in uncertain times, we know that together we will continue to fulfill our mission and ensure that no Alaskan goes hungry.

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Our Mission: Food Bank of Alaska is dedicated to eliminating hunger in Alaska by obtaining and providing food to partner agencies feeding hungry people and through anti-hunger leadership. We believe that no one deserves to be hungry.

You Help Us Move Forward Together

We already knew you were generous and caring. But your outpouring of donations and volunteer time, so your neighbors who were upended by COVID-19 have enough to eat, took our breath away. Thank you!

Because of you, we brought in more than a million pounds of additional food from March through June to meet a 75% increase in need. Volunteers in groups of 10 or fewer staying socially distant built 6,000 boxes of food, then handed them out during drive-through distributions. We added 25 new partners in rural Alaska to serve more communities. And you helped to keep the mobile food pantry, senior food box, and children's meal programs running. Thank you!

We could not have helped so many families without Walmart loaning us vacant warehouse space. Yes, the COVID-19 fight has confirmed that we must have a bigger facility to live up to our statewide role in Alaska's emergency infrastructure and also to feed an estimated 137,264 Alaskans, including almost 52,000 children, who will continue to need our help.

Thankfully, we are another step closer. We now have a signed purchase agreement on a larger warehouse. There is still some distance to go, but our goal is to be operational in our new home by next spring. Thanks to lead donor ConocoPhillips Alaska and others, we are well on our way to raise the needed funds.

No one should go hungry. This value is an anchor in rocky times where we can meet and move forward together toward a hunger-free Alaska, now and for the next generations. Your extraordinary support makes it possible.

Gratefully,



Jim Baldwin,
CEO



Artie (front, second from left) volunteers with Hope Worldwide at Food Bank of Alaska's weekly emergency food distribution.

Why I Give - Making a Big Impact

"There is more benefit to life when you give than when you take. When you volunteer, you see it," says Artie Gorash, President of the Hope Worldwide Alaska Chapter at the University of Alaska, Anchorage.

Artie founded the chapter in 2018 with his wife, Mari. Although the group has been volunteering at Food Bank of Alaska for a couple years, since March they have provided over 595 combined hours of COVID relief, mostly at the emergency food distributions.

"Many other organizations we help on a regular basis shut down their volunteer programs after COVID," Artie says. "Food distributions have been a safe way to serve people during this difficult time."

The Hope Worldwide group is comprised of students, military and everyday Anchorage citizens who want to volunteer and help people, Artie explains. "We are looking to meet any kind of needs in the community – big or small."

If you met Artie, you might be surprised that volunteering has not always been a passion of his. "I had a really rough point in my life and my mentor told me that something that helps heal your soul and your heart is to volunteer."

When he tried it, he said, "I was giving back, working hard, and meeting people who were like-minded who had good goals."

The service provided by Food Bank of Alaska and its partner organizations is not new to Artie. His family immigrated to the United States when he was very young from the Republic of Moldova in Eastern Europe. Looking for better opportunities for their family, his parents sold everything they had and moved to a new country.

"My family relied on food banks and food stamps. My parents worked really hard and used those systems to get their family in a better situation." Artie remembers his parents bringing bread and peanut butter home from the pantry and was so happy. "When I was a kid, I didn't realize how intense that was. Thinking about it as an adult, that was crazy impactful, and I don't know how my parents would have done it without the programs they had in place."

Artie hopes our neighbors who rely on our programs see he and Hope Worldwide want to make a difference. "A lot of times people lose hope and I hope they can say, 'Oh, there are people out there who care!'"

Artie encourages everyone to do something for others knowing they won't receive anything in return. He says if you aren't comfortable coming out to a public distribution with a food bank, look to your neighborhood or the people on your block.

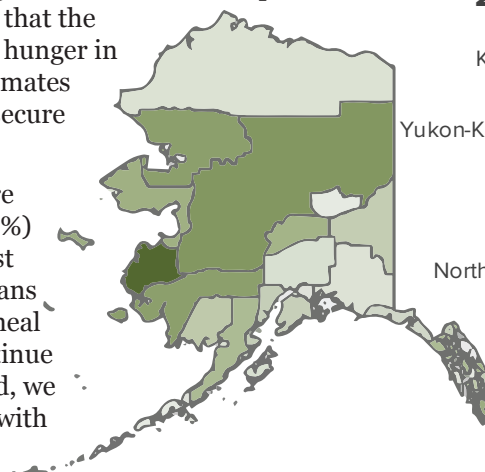
"We would make such a big impact if we all just cared a little bit."

New Map the Meal Gap Data 2020

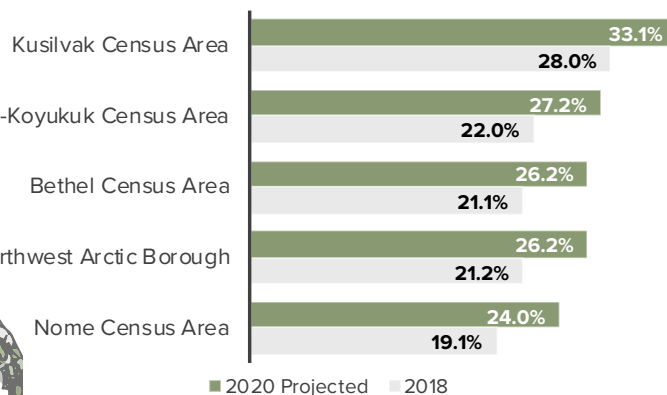
In early June of this year, Feeding America released Map the Meal Gap data that projects the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic will have on hunger in the United States. Nationally, estimates project a 46% increase in food insecure households.

In Alaska, food insecurity rates are projected to rise from 1-in-7 (12.9%) to almost 1-in-5 (18.6%), or almost 42,000 more food insecure Alaskans this year. We couldn't meet this meal gap without all of you! As we continue to respond to this increase in need, we know that all of you will be there with us advocating for policies and programs, like SNAP, that help not only hungry Alaskans, but the communities we all live in. We are grateful for all of you!

For more information about getting involved in advocacy, please contact Eve at evandommelen@foodbankofalaska.org or 907-222-3103.



2020 Projected Overall Food Insecurity Rate



Top five Alaska areas listed above. For the full list, please visit MaptheMealGap.com

At Food Bank of Alaska, we know that inequality drives hunger. For more than 40 years, the idea that nobody deserves to be hungry has motivated us to feed our neighbors in need while working to alleviate the root causes of hunger, including social inequality. Recent events that show the pain of our neighbors who experience racism and injustice have prompted us to revisit and reinvigorate our organizational values. What actions do our values compel us to take to pursue greater diversity, equity, and inclusion?

We are committed to partnering with the diverse communities we serve throughout Alaska to better understand how we can advance anti-hunger work together. I hope you will join us in the conversation to ensure that racial inequality is not a barrier to food assistance. What we learn will drive our strategic goals until no child, no family, no Alaskan is hungry.

Amy DeBruhl, Board President



“Meals to You” Brings Food Directly to Kids’ Doors in Rural Alaska

Did you know that 51% of Alaska’s children are eligible for free and reduced price meals, yet only about 9% of children who participate in the National School Lunch Program, participated in the Summer Food Service Program last year? Summer food programs can help fill the gap left when kids lose their school meals, but we know that this important program is underutilized. The fact is, that while Food Bank of Alaska runs many successful summer food programs around the state, some communities need more flexibility in order to make the program work for them.

To fill this gap, the “Meals To You” program was brought to Alaska. Instead of expecting kids to come to a lunch program somewhere in their community, Meals To You allows eligible families to sign up and have summer food delivered to their door through the US Postal Service.

This US Department of Agriculture pilot program is a partnership between Food Bank of Alaska, the State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, and the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty in

Texas. The program is being piloted in the Bering Strait School District.

Little did we know as we worked to finalize this program in Alaska this past winter that the program would be an important tool in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic as it provided an easy, socially distant way to deliver food to families in need. The Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty was able to get additional funding and authority to launch Emergency Meals to You, which helped replace lost school meals in five rural Alaskan school districts, including Bristol Bay Borough, Lake and Peninsula, Northwest Arctic Borough, Southwest Region, and Unalaska City School Districts.

Together, Emergency Meals to You and Summer Meals to You have served 269,370 meals to 2,755 kids.

We extend our deepest gratitude to Senator Murkowski for championing the issue of summer flexibility with USDA, which allowed us to join the Meals to You program and reach more hungry Alaskan kids!



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Hunger Action Month

Every action counts! This September we ask you to join us with actions that help end hunger.

10th

Hunger Action Day

Sharing, volunteering, pledging to advocate, fundraising, and donating are just a few ways you can pitch in!

11th

Day of Caring Food Drive

Join the United Way of Anchorage September 11th for their annual food drive for Food Bank of Alaska!

14-18th

Volunteer Event

Take action against hunger and join volunteers for this month's Senior Box Build, September 14-18.

Text the word
"HUNGER"
to

345345

to help provide
meals to Alaskans
in need.

Visit our website to learn more about these and other activities throughout September.

You Helped Feed Kids This Summer

"When school is out, children may not have any other source for lunches," says Sandra Mitchell, Program and Agency Relations Manager at Food Bank of Alaska. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity has risen dramatically, and the meals provided through the US Department of Agriculture Summer Meals Program are more important than ever.

In the Native Village of Kipnuk, Martha Paul distributes meals for 150 children, which is more than ever before. But the distribution method has changed in order to stay socially distant and safe. "When the program started, children were served meals Monday through Friday and they had to eat on site. This year, parents pick up meals for their children for the whole week."

Summer Meals Program sites across Alaska served 18,773 meals to kids in June 2019, but this year there were over 4,000 additional participants. At 20 locations around the state, 1,747 children received nearly 23,000 meals this past June!

"Without your help, this program wouldn't be possible," says Sandra.