

Conquering Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is a daily reality for many. Low-income and moderate-income families, the elderly, and people with disabilities are at risk for food insecurity in neighborhoods with limited transportation options, greater travel distance to stores, and fewer supermarkets. In 2021, the Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE) noticed these and other barriers to residents accessing food, especially healthy food items. HACE partners with community agencies to address the need and accessibility of quality food.

The results indicate that these programs address food deserts and provide fresh, healthy food to residents!

- Approximately 300 individuals/families benefit from monthly food distributions, and around 150 youth and seniors are served through daily food programs.
- HACE operates seven food distribution sites within our housing communities in the City of Erie.
- Residents can receive 50-60 pounds of food a month in the John Horan Garden Apartments, which is a 450-unit development, and Eastbrook, a 60-unit development.
- The YMCA Kids Club is an after-school recreation program that serves youth ages six to 14 years old. Each day, approximately 70 youths receive a nutritious snack and dinner.
- The total cost is minimal due to support from partner agencies and volunteers. HACE's innovative approach brings food directly to residents, overcoming transportation barriers.
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion are crucial considerations, as food insecurity disproportionately affects minorities. HACE's food distribution programs address these disparities by serving residents with limited resources and transportation.



“The partnership between the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania and The Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE) is vital in the face of rising inflation, high grocery costs, and cuts to SNAP benefits.

As of April 2023, Second Harvest operates seven food programs for HACE residents. The two monthly programs are “Produce Express” mobile food pantry distributions. The remaining five programs serve approximately 140 individuals at five different HACE sites through the Senior Food Box Program.

The “Produce Express” program at John E. Horan Garden Apartments started in March 2021 and now serves around 75 households per month, equating to over 225 people. Similarly, the “Produce Express” at Eastbrook Apartment Complex began in August 2021 and now assists 60-70 households monthly.

Second Harvest's Senior Food Box Program provides a 30-pound box of food and a 2-pound block of cheese to income-eligible HACE residents at various locations, including John Horan, Schmid Towers, Friendship Apartments, Ostrow Apartments, and Curry/Schell Apartments. This blossoming partnership between Second Harvest and HACE is a significant step in addressing food insecurity for those in need.”

Karen Seggi

Chief Executive Officer,
Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania

Background

HACE owns and manages more than 2,000 housing units in the City of Erie for low and moderate-income families, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Due to HACE residents being low-income, food insecurity is an issue. Prices are higher, residents became unemployed during COVID, and food stamps/money don't go as far. Recently, emergency COVID benefit payments ended, which affected tens of thousands of people around Erie. Research shows an association between food insecurity and the risk of chronic illnesses. Food-insecure adults may be at an increased risk for negative health outcomes and health disparities. Food-insecure children may also be at an increased risk for negative health outcomes, including obesity.

Impact

Food distribution programs are making a significant impact by providing residents with access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food. Ongoing activities are vital, given the reduction in food stamps and rising food costs. Potential expansions are under consideration, highlighting the program's success.

With the help from partner agencies who also have the goal of providing food to those in need the cost of programs is minimal.



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