



## Perry County Food Bank

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*“Doing nothing for others is the undoing of ourselves.” – Horace Mann*

Our mission statement is, *“The Perry County Food Bank exists to provide wholesome and nutritional supplemental food to Perry County families in need and to provide education about foods, food preparation, nutrition, health, wellness, and self-sufficiency in a dignified manner.”*

The two of us have been with the food bank as directors for five years and have been volunteering before that for a number of years. In that time we have come to know our clients and their needs. We have a handle on why they are using the food bank and, to a certain extent, what their circumstances are. We have come to know that, if they need the food bank for food, they are in need of a host of other social services as well. Because we see more than 800 families each month in this one place, it makes sense to us that this is a good place to link clients up with other social service agencies that can help with services other than food.

We know that gasoline is a big issue with those in need. They will usually find a way to get food but will frequently pass on opportunities for health screenings, educational opportunities, and other needed free services because there is not enough gas. We know this because we have been trying to teach cooking and nutrition skills and have people sign up for those classes but then they don't show up because of gas.

We have been opening up our very limited waiting room space to health care nurses, health center outreach professionals, insurance enrollment specialists, vision screening specialists; job recruiters and others. Our current building is adequate for serving the food needs of our clients, but it is inadequate to take on our much broader mission.

Because the needs of our clients are so great, we have explored the feasibility of adding onto our current building to provide space for these outside services to meet with our clientele in a more private, relaxed area rather than in a waiting room full of other clients who might be overhearing private information. Included in the plan is a meeting space/classroom for cooking and nutrition classes and for outside agencies to present programs on health, wellness, nutrition, job opportunities and other services. Our vision is not to provide these other benefits but to provide a facility where other agencies would be able to come and offer their services to clients who are already here for food.

The planned addition will give us 50% more space than our current facility with an emphasis on education and health and wellness opportunities for those who would not otherwise take advantage of what's available to them. Look for more information about this project in the coming months. We are now at the stage of beginning to secure funds to begin the project. So, if you have an extra one or two hundred thousand dollars you don't know what to do with, we would be interested in meeting with you — soon!

In the month of January, we served 1,253 households with 42 of those being new and 3,090 individuals with 108 of those being new. In the month of December, our numbers were 1,258 households with 70 considered new and 3039 individuals with 191 being new.

Linda Bates & John Kiner  
Co-directors, Perry County Food Bank