



Perry County Food Bank

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“But nothing is solid and permanent. Our lives are raised on the shakiest foundations. You don't need to read history books to know that. You only have to know the history of your own life.” – Ron Rash, One Food in Eden.

We want to start off the New Year by wishing everyone a happy, healthy, and prosperous 2017. The business that we are in here at the food bank, we see a lot of unhappiness, ill-health, and poverty. But we also see a lot of happiness in some of the places that you would least expect it. People may have lost their jobs or be suffering with some form of health issue, and yet they are able to still be upbeat about things. Some of that we believe comes from the experiences that they have with our volunteers and staff and knowing that there are people who care. For all of us it is a joyous experience just to know that there are people who care about us.

Someone gave us an article from *Reader's Digest* that was written by Jennifer Ball-Tufford and originally printed in *Family Circle*. Jennifer was working at a school that was having a food drive. Walking past a box on the floor of a hallway by the office where donations were accumulating another staff person looked in and said that “those people” wouldn't know what some of the items, like quinoa, were, let alone how to use them. Jennifer was taken aback by the demeaning remark about “those people” because she was one of “those people” herself a few months earlier. Her husband had left and support was slow in coming. At first she refused to go to the food bank until the day came and she was totally without food and even then she had several false starts before she worked up the courage to go through the door. That's the hardest part, going through the door. She relates how grateful she was for any food that was available on any given day, even the old produce and unusual food like quinoa. At least it was food for her and the four kids. “Those people.” She wanted to scream, “you don't know a thing about how it feels to walk into one of “those places” and be one of ‘those people’. You've never looked at your kids and had to hide your tears because you had no idea how your were going to feed them.” She wanted to scream that but instead just said, “I like quinoa.” “Of course you do,” came the reply. “You're not one of “those people.”

We see “those people” everyday. We see single moms who have been left high-and-dry with kids to support and no help from the father. We see “those people” who are disabled and want to work but their disability keeps them from doing it. We see “those people” who just lost their job and need help until food stamps kick in while they are searching for work. We see “those people” who are infirmed and the elderly who can't make it on Social Security alone. We see “those people” who have become widows and widowers and suddenly find their spouse gone. As hard as it is to deal with that loss, they now find that part of their Social Security which allowed them to keep their heads above water is gone as well. “Those people.”

Unless we have contact with “those people” we develop an image of who we think “those people” are and what they are like. At the food bank, we see “those people” everyday and listen to their stories and realize that life is uncertain and that circumstances beyond our control can strike suddenly. And we realize that any one of us can become one of “those people” almost instantly. “Those people” look just like us because they are.

Thank you for reaching out to help “those people” here in Perry County.

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