



Perry County Food Bank

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*Fast away the old year passes, Hail the new, ye lads and lasses! Sing we joyous all together,
Heedless of the wind and weather, Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la!* — Deck the Halls (Christmas Carol)

It's hard to believe that it is the start of a new year — 2019! Where did 2018 go? Evidently it was washed away with all of the rain that we have experienced in this last year, which turned out to be the 2nd wettest year on record. No matter, 2018 is now history and we prepare a new slate for 2019. The start of a new year is always a good time to reflect on the year just ended and look forward to the year that is just beginning.

Looking at our numbers for 2018 (2017 numbers are in parentheses) – families and people served, donations of money, food, and services — we accommodated 13,721 (14,503) total households/families and 32,532 (35,008) individuals with food, both in our store in New Bloomfield and at our 8 remote distribution sites around the county on the weekend of the third Saturday of the month. We received \$52,547 (\$53,265.51) in state grants; \$79,091 (\$89,786.54) in private donations; a much needed \$35,000 Hoverter grant; and 117,728 (121,565) pounds of donated food valued at \$195,430 (\$210,610.36). In addition to the donated food, we purchased 421,777 (518,222) pounds of food from the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank at a cost of \$57,273 (\$55,541.56) and received 33,000 pounds of food from the US Department of Agriculture valued at \$35,274. We also purchased nearly 53,652 (55,000) pounds of food from our grocery wholesaler. All totaled we distributed 626,158 pounds of food. The Backpack program received \$47,112 (\$29,793) in donations and grants and sent home nearly 67,483 pounds of food with elementary school students.

As you can see from the numbers, most of the 2018 numbers are down. We suspected this in the last half of the year but the numbers went up, as usual, in November and December. When the year was finished though, the numbers were down, even with the uptick in the last two months. We have speculated on why this has happened and concluded that more people are finding jobs that allow them to support themselves and their families. In talking with clients over the years, we have had people tell us that they wanted to work but all they could find were jobs paying minimum wage and by taking those jobs they would lose health care and other benefits that they were receiving and they would not be able to make ends meet.

The news in 2018 is that unemployment is down and good paying jobs are up. We both saw this when we visited a local gas station/convenience store with a sign on the door with a starting pay of \$10/hour — right off the street. These were jobs that had been minimum wage jobs for years but now, perhaps in an effort to compete for employees, are paying much higher wages. We think this may be the reason that our numbers are down

Numbers being down is a good thing in our business. Ideally our numbers should be zero because everyone is healthy and able to find work in good paying jobs. But that will never happen because we will always have those who can't work because of age, disabilities, sudden unemployment, or other conditions. So, we rejoice in dropping numbers if it is a sign of increasing prosperity.

In December, our numbers were 1,149 households with 45 considered new and 2,689 individuals with 126 being new. In November we served 1,198 households with 75 of them being new and 2,815 individuals with 182 being new.

Our wish is that you all will have a Happy, Healthy, and Prosperous New Year!

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