

## Thousands of local families receive Project Holiday meals



**Congressman Dave Loeb sack helps bag groceries during Project Holiday with Crisis Center volunteer Chuck Felling.**

Hundreds of local donors and volunteers marked a significant achievement in December, distributing holiday meals to more than 1,700 local families.

Project Holiday is sponsored by MidWestOne Bank, which hosted this year's kick-off event featuring former Hawkeyes and NFL kicker Nate Kaeding and Congressman Dave Loeb sack. For 29 years, Project Holiday has provided families with the ingredients for a home-cooked holiday meal, including a chicken or turkey, along with their choice of side dishes, including both American and international staples.

"Project Holiday means a lot to our family — we're able to have a nice meal that we might not be able to otherwise," said one Food Bank client.

Distributing meals for nearly 5,000

clients is a significant undertaking and it all takes place alongside the Food Bank's usual operations. More than 100 community members filled Project Holiday volunteer shifts over four days, in addition to regular shifts filled by volunteers on a weekly basis.

The Crisis Center collaborated with the Coralville Community Food Pantry and the North Liberty Community Pantry to distribute meals to clients throughout Johnson County. In all, residents of 9 local municipalities and rural Johnson County participated in Project Holiday this year.

"We are very fortunate to have a such wide support from community donors and volunteers. They really are the ones who make The Crisis Center's work possible," said Crisis Center Executive Director Becci Reedus.

### By the numbers

- 1,700+ families signed up for Project Holiday, representing 5,341 people.
- 329 community members chipped in to cover the costs of Project Holiday.
- 600 estimated hours were contributed by volunteers for Project Holiday distribution.

## Mobile Pantry extends Crisis Center's reach

The Crisis Center established a new program in 2016 that is making a big impact for hungry families in Johnson County.

Thanks to the generous support of the Johnson County Board of Supervisors and Johnson County Social Services, the Mobile Food Pantry is connecting with families at three underserved mobile home courts in Johnson County. The Mobile Food Pantry visits each of the three sites once per month so clients can select their groceries without having to travel to one of the local pantries.

Since the program started last fall, dozens of families have either received Crisis Center food assistance for the first time, or started visiting the Mobile Food Pantry instead of The Crisis Center Food Bank. Several local businesses and organizations have partnered with the Mobile Food Pantry to provide additional services on-site, like SNAP outreach, nutritional resources, and a mobile library.

"In our conversations with clients, transportation is the single biggest barrier to visiting The Crisis Center Food Bank in person," said Bridget Fonseca, Community Food Projects Coordinator. "The Mobile Food Pantry provides an alternative for those families and so far the response from clients has been overwhelmingly positive."

The program began in October and has already served more than 150 families at its three sites. Fonseca anticipates serving even more families as the weather improves. In addition, each family receives an average of 55 pounds of food at each visit. This is nearly twice as much as the average family visiting the Food Bank.

### Is your group interested in volunteering?

**The Mobile Pantry Program would love to hear from you!**

**Visit [www.jccrisiscenter.org](http://www.jccrisiscenter.org) to learn more!**

### Inside Project Holiday:

**Visit our website,**

[www.jccrisiscenter.org](http://www.jccrisiscenter.org),

**for a special look inside**

**The Crisis Center Food Bank during Project Holiday 2016.**

## Connecting with the Development Department

Jessica Lien joined The Crisis Center's Communications and Development team in 2016, focusing on fundraising and stewardship. Jessica has a wide range of duties, including tracking donations, following up with donors, planning fundraising events, and strategizing to grow The Crisis Center's support.



"My job is extremely rewarding because I get to connect community members with The Crisis Center in ways

that are meaningful to them, whether it's through donations of time, talent, or treasure," Jessica said.

Jessica has previous experience working in the philanthropy field and she studied English and communications at Coe College.

Community members can contact Jessica with questions about donating to The Crisis Center or planning a fundraising event by email at [jessica.lien@jccrisiscenter.org](mailto:jessica.lien@jccrisiscenter.org), or by phone at 319.351.2726 ext. 105.

## Strength of Mobile Crisis Program in collaboration

The Mobile Crisis Outreach team is filling a critical gap for community members with mental illness.

One recent case demonstrates that need: The Mobile Crisis Outreach team got a call from a Johnson County resident who suffers from extreme agoraphobia, which prevents the person from leaving their home at all. The client's roommate — who had helped with tasks outside the home such as shopping — moved out, leaving the client with no access to food or even quarters to operate the on-site laundry machines. To further complicate the situation, the client formerly had access to psychiatric care at home but access to services changed.

Mobile Crisis Outreach counselors were able to respond quickly, bringing a pack of easy-to-prepare food from The Crisis Center Food Bank. Counselors have made a few follow-up visits since, helping the client complete applications for county services and providing basic therapy.

"What's unique is that, thanks to The Crisis Center's partnership between Crisis Intervention, Food Bank, and Emergency Assistance services, we were able to help the person meet many of their basic needs," said Mobile Crisis Outreach Coordinator Timothy Kelly. "We are filling the gap until we can address those barriers to services."

Counselors can be deployed anywhere in the community, so clients can get help outside of traditional settings like clinics and hospitals when they face emergency

situations.

Over the past 6 months, the Mobile Crisis Outreach program has already been deployed nearly 200 times. In 83 percent of those cases, the situation was de-escalated without hospitalization or arrest.

## 2017 Calendar

Visit [jccrisiscenter.org](http://jccrisiscenter.org) for more information about what's going on at The Crisis Center.

**February 1 - 28**

**Spread the Love**

The annual PB&J campaign. Go online for help hosting a drive.

**Friday, February 17**  
**Volunteer application deadline**

<http://www.jccrisiscenter.org/volunteer-now/>

**Saturday, March 4**

**Pancake Breakfast**

Breakfast fundraiser at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church.

**April 1 - 30**

**Shower The Crisis Center**

We're collecting diapers, formula, and other baby products for families in need.



## From the Director ...

Since I joined The Crisis Center eight years ago, we have continued to grow and provide even more services to the Johnson County community. In 2016, we were able to continue that growth with your help and the help of our incredible community partners.

Through a grant from the Johnson County Board of Supervisors and Social Services, we embarked on a new journey with our Food Bank Program serving even more residents experiencing food insecurity through our School and Mobile Pantry Programs. We were also able to expand our Mobile Crisis Outreach Program, nearly tripling the number of responses each month.

Additionally, the support of people like you has helped us to feel more secure in our growth. At times, 2016 was, to be frank, a little scary. The Crisis Center has always been able to step up to meet the needs of the community and this year was no different because the community has never failed to help us meet the challenge.

Your support and the support of our community partners continues to help us provide quality services to our friends and neighbors experiencing crisis. Every day I am so thankful to be part of such a supportive community. I am looking forward to continuing this journey along side you in 2017!

- Becci Reedus, Executive Director