

Food Bank of Northwest Indiana

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Supplying food to local pantries
for more than 25 years

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AREA STUDENTS HELP THE FOOD BANK ‘SPREAD THE LOVE’ Local Schools Participate in the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana’s Second Peanut Butter Food Drive

Gary, IN—The month of September is Hunger Action Month, and the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana is once again holding their Spread the Love Peanut Butter food drive in conjuncture with local schools. The drive begins on September 1st and runs through September 30th. Over 40 elementary, middle and high schools from Lake and Porter Counties, and over 25,000 students have signed on to participate. The goal for these schools is to raise 50,000 jars of protein rich peanut butter. Peanut butter is a great source of protein, especially for those living on a budget who can’t afford other high protein foods like meat and eggs. It can also be kept for longer periods of time without spoiling. Last year, Spread the Love brought in over 23,000 jars.

Aside from raising jars of peanut butter, the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana also hopes that “Spread the Love” will raise student’s awareness of hunger in their area. As the effects of the recession continue to linger, more and more region families are turning to pantries and other support programs to make ends meet. “With unemployment in Lake County at 9.6% and 7.5% in Porter County there is still a great deal of need out there. 17% of Northwest Indiana resident are food insecure, so participating in food drives like Spread the Love are a great way for people to get involved in fighting hunger in their communities,” says Food Procurement Manager Derek Frazier.

The idea for the drive stemmed from a similar event in Oklahoma City. Frazier explains, “I got the idea from the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma. They encouraged schools to compete to see who could raise the most canned food items. We wanted to go one step farther and make the requested item peanut butter, and by creating competitions that students of all age groups could get involved in.”

In addition to the great feeling of knowing they helped their neighbors in need, there are other incentives for students to get involved. The classroom in each elementary school that collects the most jars will win a pizza party sponsored by Boston’s The Gourmet Pizza Restaurant and Sports Bar. Donations can also be made at their Schererville location. A traveling trophy will be provided to both the middle and high school that raises the most jars.

For those individuals who would like to get involved but don’t have a child in school, or their child’s school isn’t participating in the drive, donations of peanut butter can be made at all area Strack & Van Til Food Markets, Ultra Foods and Town and Country Food Markets.

For Frazier the importance of this particular food drive is simple. “Forty-five percent of the people we serve are children. 21.4% of kids in Northwest Indiana, that’s over 40,000 kids, don’t know where their next meal is going to come from. My hope is that kids will come away from this food drive knowing that, because of their

participation in ‘Spread the Love,’ they made a difference in another child’s life.” For more information please visit the Food Bank’s website at www.foodbanknwi.org. There they also have a link to the ‘Spread the Love’ Facebook page.

The Food Bank of Northwest Indiana is located in Gary and supplies food to over 100 pantries and soup kitchens in Lake and Porter Counties. In addition to distributing food to their member agencies the Food Bank also runs the BackPack, Kid’s Café, Mobile Pantry, Food Rescue and Pantry on the Go programs and offers pantry referrals. Last year the Food Bank distributed over 4.7 million pounds of food, and served over 5,000 individuals a week.

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If you would like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview please call or email Megan Sikes.