

## A CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP

### DEAR PARTNER,



*On August 1st, at the request of Shannon Mason, who came on board in January as the new executive director of Mercer Street Friends, I assumed a new position with the agency as the Director of Advancement.*

*So, I packed a few files and relocated to 151 Mercer Street in Trenton, where I began my career some 25 years ago.*

*Rucha Gadre, who previously served as the Food Bank's director of programs and member services, has taken on the position of Food Bank Director. We are very fortunate to have such a capable, knowledgeable and talented person to lead and steward the Food Bank into the future.*

*In my new role, I plan, oversee, direct and integrate the fundraising, grant writing, communications, advocacy and civic engagement for **all the divisions** of Mercer Street Friends – Children and Youth Services, Food Bank, and Parenting and Adult Services.*

*This enables me to still stay linked and connected with the Food Bank but to also advance and support the work of the other parts and focuses of Mercer Street Friends to provide early education to Trenton preschoolers; teach moms how to become better parents and break the cycle of child abuse and neglect; improve basic math and reading skills and move adults closer to obtaining a GED; prepare and assist TANF recipients in gaining employment; and offer Trenton youth positive alternatives through educational, recreational and work related opportunities as well as individual counseling.*

*So I have not gone away and you will continue to see me, hear my voice, read my words...but now articulating a broader perspective of poverty and its attendant consequences.*

*It has been my pleasure and satisfaction to shepherd the food bank from its inception to its place today in leading the community response to hunger. I have been privileged to work with a very able and dedicated staff and corps of volunteers and take great pride in our accomplishments.*

*I am both challenged and excited about serving Mercer Street Friends in this new capacity. I am also extremely confident that together we will successfully tackle the newly minted mission of Mercer Street Friends...“Bridging opportunity gaps...Helping families and communities make the journey out of poverty.”*

*We shall keep in touch.*

*Phyllis*

### DEAR FRIENDS,



*I am very excited to introduce myself as the Director of Mercer Street Friends Food Bank. As someone who admires the mission of the organization, I am looking forward to this role as an opportunity to accelerate the growth of the Food Bank in serving our community.*

*I grew up in Mumbai, India and came to the US in 2005 for my masters in Nutritional Sciences at University of Georgia. After graduation, I worked as a Nutrition Support Counselor for WIC in California before moving to New Jersey in 2010.*

*I started my journey with the Food Bank as a SNAP outreach coordinator and have evolved over time to be responsible for various programs here at the Food Bank.*

*As Food Bank Director, I will be responsible for day-to-day oversight and management of our ongoing programs and introduction of new programs designed to serve the changing needs of our community.*

*While there may be many challenges ahead, I believe every challenge presents an opportunity for reward, whether a senior citizen benefits from our new CSFP program, or a hungry child getting much needed food through our SHUP program.*

*My focus will also be to build new relations and strengthen partnerships with other community leaders. Part of this outreach includes keeping open communication with all of you. Please feel free to reach out to me or my staff to let us know what we are doing right and where we can improve.*

*Our Food Bank has no immunity towards the harshness of the changing economic conditions. However, with kind and generous well wishers such as you, we are able to serve the families in need. You are an important part of the Food Bank and I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your continuous help and support.*

*Last but not the least; I want to thank Phyllis Stoober for giving me this opportunity and trusting me with this responsibility. In her 25 years here at the Food Bank, her dedication and achievements are unparalleled. I want to wish her the very best in her new role but also want to remind everyone that she will always remain a very big part of the Food Bank.*

*Sincerely,*

*Rucha*

# Food Bank Launches New Program for Seniors

The Mercer Street Friends Food Bank has begun a new program to deliver nutritious food boxes to 100 low-income senior citizens through the Community Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) of the US Department of Agriculture.

CSFP is designed to provide nutritional food products to low income Americans 60 years of age or older to close meal and nutrition gaps. The program is restricted to recipients with annual gross incomes no higher than 130 percent of the federal poverty level (currently \$14,937 for a household of one; \$20,163 for a two-person household.)

The boxes will be distributed once a month at the Lawrence Senior Plaza, Lawrence Neighborhood Center and Mt. Carmel Guild.



Each food box contains 100% juice, cereal, grains, canned vegetables, canned fruit, two protein items, peanut butter and dairy products, including cheese.

The latest data shows that, in Mercer County, nearly 3,000 elderly residents are living below 100 percent of the federal poverty level.

According to the New Jersey Foundation for the Aging, 25 percent of all seniors in our state rely on Social Security as their only income. Given the high cost of living in New Jersey, it is not surprising that this population faces food shortages.

There are many factors contributing to hunger among seniors:

- Seniors living on fixed incomes have seen the cost of housing, transportation and health care rise in recent years, leaving less of their budget available for food.
- The high cost medications can force seniors to choose between medicine and food.
- Mobility limitations make grocery shopping or cooking very difficult, if not impossible.
- Living in communities where there are no supermarkets nearby or outlets for fresh produce and other healthy foods.
- Higher food prices when shopping at the street corner bodega or mom and pop grocery store versus supermarkets.



## FOOD BANK COLLECTS DATA FOR NATIONAL HUNGER STUDY

Since 1993, Feeding America, the national network of food banks, has conducted a national study every four years to provide a portrait and understanding of the people and households that experience food insecurity, their circumstances and how food assistance programs help them.

As a Partner Distributing Organization of Feeding America, Mercer Street Friends collected data for *Hunger in America 2014*, the sixth such study.

Food Bank staff visited food pantries and meal sites, equipped with touch screen tablets that allowed the individuals who volunteered to participate in the study to privately answer sensitive questions about their personal circumstances, such as financial hardships, housing situation, and demographic information, without needing to share their responses publicly with a stranger.

The client surveys will be used to learn the characteristics, life circumstances and coping strategies of people who receive groceries, meals or other food related benefits from hunger relief programs.

The second part of the *Hunger in America 2014* study will contain findings from a web based survey of food bank member agencies. This survey secured information on the programs and services that hunger relief charities provide, their utilization of the services and programs offered by their food bank, and their internal capabilities and resources.

At the close of the client data collection period, nearly 64,000 individuals shared their stories through the client survey. Participating food banks visited twice as many programs (12,500+) as were visited in *Hunger in America 2010*, adding diversity and breadth to the clientele whose stories were captured.

Findings from the Hunger in America study will be released in the spring of 2014.

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**TableTalk** A PUBLICATION FROM THE  
MERCER STREET FRIENDS FOOD BANK  
**Contributors:** Rucha Gadre, Brian Peterson and  
Phyllis Stoolmacher

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# House of Representatives Cuts SNAP by \$40 Billion



In September, the House voted to cut \$40 billion from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Estimates from the Congressional Budget Office found that the cuts will eliminate benefits for approximately 3.8 million low income Americans in 2014. The loss of benefits would impact the most vulnerable citizens by denying food assistance to children, seniors, active duty military and working parents earning low wages.

This action comes in spite of newly released studies showing hunger in

America has not abated since the start of the recession.

Food insecurity data, released in September by the Economic Research Service of the US Department of Agriculture in its annual report on food insecurity in America, shows that more than 48.9 million Americans – one in six Americans – lived in households struggling against hunger in 2012. Of them, 15.8 million are children (21.6 percent of all children)

In New Jersey, 80 percent of households receiving SNAP benefits have incomes below the poverty line (about \$23,550 for a family of four) and more than a third are in deep poverty with incomes below 50 percent of the poverty line.

Cutting SNAP benefits at a time when wages are stagnant and there are fewer jobs to go around will push even more families into poverty. SNAP benefits put food on the table, allow households to use their limited finances for other basic necessities and relieve family stress.

It is unlikely that the Senate will support such a draconian cut to SNAP or that the

President would sign legislation to unravel and dismantle the nation's safety net against hunger.

## A Tale of Two Congressmen

Both members of Congress representing respective parts of Mercer County, Representative Rush Holt (12th CD) and Representative Chris Smith (4th CD) voted against the bill to cut SNAP.

What makes these votes unusual is that Congressman Holt is a Democrat and Congressman Smith is a Republican and they express and advocate for very differing viewpoints regarding the role of government.

Nonetheless, on this bill, they shared common ground, standing up for their most vulnerable constituents – working poor, children and elderly – who struggle to put food on the table.

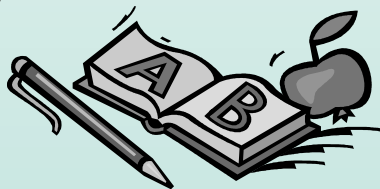
We thank them for their votes and urge them to continue to vote against any bill that would make deep cuts to SNAP or weaken the program's reach and benefits.

## FROM THE MAILBOX

Dear Brian and Mercer Street Friends,

Words cannot express the depth of gratitude felt by the Gregory School students and community for your most generous provision of produce to us. I know it made a difference many times in the diet of a lot of folks. The children would often comment on how good the produce was and looked forward to the next Thursday. "Thank you" seems to be not enough, so I am enclosing a money order for \$25.00 from the families, staff and students to help with your work. We will see you again in the fall.

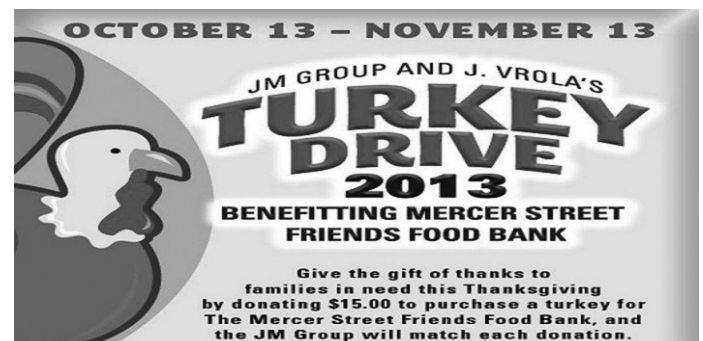
Mrs. Darlene C. McKnight,  
Parent Liaison



## Thanksgiving

The Food Bank welcomes donations of turkeys and all the trimmings for the holiday meal. Donations of turkeys and other holiday food may be dropped off at the Food Bank Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

In addition to holiday items, we are *always* in need of canned fruit and vegetables, tuna fish and salmon, rice and cereals.



Look for the display at Blue Point Grill, Nassau Seafood, and Witherspoon Grill



# Connecting with Our Community to End Hunger

## ROTARIANS SEND HUNGER PACKING

During the month of September, members of the **Robbinsville Hamilton Sunrise Rotary** collected food donations for Send Hunger Packing at the Acme (Route 33 in Hamilton), Risoldi's Market and the ShopRite at Hamilton MarketPlace. The Rotarians collected close to 3,000 pounds of food for the program while raising awareness of child hunger in our community.



(l. to r) Brian Peterson, MSF Food Bank Community Resource Liaison; Lisa Simmons, Rotarian; and Antonio Bellamy, MSF Food Bank AmeriCorps member.

## TRENTON HALF MARATHON

Register for the November 9th **Trenton Half Marathon** and use the code **MERCERFRIENDS** and 20% of the registration fee will be donated to Mercer Street Friends. In addition runners and spectators can bring nonperishable food items to the race for donation to the Food Bank.



## A SOUPER IDEA

During the month of October, **Agricola Eatery** is donating \$1.00 to the Mercer Street Friends Food Bank for every bowl of soup served. The restaurant is located at 11 Nassau Street, Princeton.



## PRINCETON COMMUNITY ACTION 2013

Thank you **Princeton University Community Action 2013 Arts Team** for designing and painting a beautiful mural on a warehouse wall at the Mercer Street Friends Food Bank. This marks the fifth year that Princeton University students, participating in Community Action, have painted a hunger themed mural to brighten up the Food Bank's walls and showcase its work to end hunger.



Mural painters (left to right): Sarah Kim, Nicole Sato, Eric Yang, Kelly Zhou, Selah Hampton, Zena Kesselman, Aaron Robertson, Justine Mauro, Kelsey Dyer, Safa Syed, Nicolas Hoong, Julia Schorn, Demi Fang, Priana Misra, Tacey-Ann Wisdom and Amanda Lawrence.

# Recent Grants and Awards

- **Bloomberg** – *World Hunger Day Observance*
- **Church and Dwight** – *Healthy Eating Initiatives*
- **Danellie Foundation** – *SNAP Outreach*
- **Feinstein Foundation** – *Hunger Relief*
- **Goldie B. Rojer Hunger Fund at the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Mercer** – *Hunger Relief*
- **Grainger Foundation** – *Send Hunger Packing*
- **Ten Acre** – *Hunger Relief*
- **Zonta Club of Trenton/Mercer** – *Send Hunger Packing*

## VOLUNTEER COUNTS

August through Mid-October, 2013

*Thanks to the following groups for helping in the warehouse during this period.*

Number of Volunteers..... **112**

Number of Hours..... **359**

### GROUPS:

- Alpha Phi Omega – TCNJ
- Bank of America/Merrill Lynch
- Bristol-Myers Squibb – Human Resources
- CMC Americas, Inc.
- Credit Suisse
- CWA 1036 Community Service Committee
- Lend Lease (US) Construction
- Princeton University 2013 Community Action – Arts Group
- Princeton University 2013 Community Action – Hunger Group
- Prudential Fox & Roach
- Rider University
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

*If you would like to volunteer, please call us at 609-406-0503.*

*I want to be part of the community response to hunger. Here is my contribution of:*

\$50    \$100    \$250    Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/ZIP code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make check payable to:**  
Mercer Street Friends Food Bank  
824 Silvia Street, Ewing, NJ 08628

*Your contribution is tax deductible as allowed by law.*



**Bridging opportunity gaps... Helping families and communities make the journey out of poverty.**

Mercer Street Friends is a Quaker affiliated, nonsectarian human care organization that works to reduce hunger and food insecurity, close education gaps, and improve the physical and emotional well-being of at-risk populations through its three divisions:

- Children and Youth Services
- Food Bank
- Parenting and Adult Services

To learn more about the programs and services of Mercer Street Friends, please visit our website at [www.mercerstreetfriends.org](http://www.mercerstreetfriends.org).





# TableTalk

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## DON'T FORGET TO CHECK-OUT HUNGER®

Check-Out Hunger®, the annual supermarket based campaign to raise funds for New Jersey's food banks, has a new look and a new sponsor – Premio Foods.

Check-Out Hunger® runs every year from late September through the end of January during varying times at the participating stores over the four-month period. Shoppers can donate wherever they see the Check-Out Hunger® displays.

100% of donations made in Mercer County come to the Mercer Street Friends Food Bank. Participating stores in our service area are: Marrazzo's, McCaffrey's Market, Pennington Quality Market, Risoldi's, ShopRite, Wawa and Wegmans.

Shoppers wishing to make a donation simply tear off the donation slip located near the register, hand the slip to the cashier where it is scanned like any other purchase. The donation is simply added to the grocery bill and appears on the receipt. It is as easy as buying a loaf of bread.

Donations made at stores outside our service area are directed to another member of the NJ Federation of Food Banks: Community FoodBank of New Jersey, FoodBank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties, Food Bank of South Jersey and NORWESCAP Food Bank.

Shoppers at the Pennington Stop N Shop can also support Mercer Street Friends by making a donation to "Food for Friends".

**CHECK-OUT HUNGER® IN NEW JERSEY**

THANK YOU \$1 THANK YOU \$3 THANK YOU \$5

Please support your local Feeding America Food Bank. 100% of your donation helps provide food for your neighbors in need.

Ask your cashier for details.

100% OF YOUR DONATION SUPPORTS **MERCER STREET FRIENDS** Food Bank

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