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Volunteers donate more than 50,600 hours amidst COVID-19

Food Bank celebrates National Volunteer Appreciation Day

Duquesne, PA (April 22, 2021) – Thursday, April 22 marks National Volunteer Appreciation Day. At Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank (the Food Bank), **in the last year, more than 6,000 volunteers donated more than 50,600 hours to ending hunger in our region.**

Many of the individuals regularly volunteering at the Food Bank are older adults who are amidst the population more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with COVID-19. Despite this, these individuals in the last year have only increased their dedication, oftentimes volunteering multiple days a week helping our neighbors in need.

“Just by the number of people who drove-up to those distributions, it was really clear there was a tremendous need for us to get food out to the community, shared Howard Harris, volunteer at the Food Bank. “We just felt it was something we had to do – wanting to make sure that everybody in our community had something to eat.”

At the beginning of the pandemic, the Food Bank instituted additional health and safety protocols to protect volunteers, staff and the individuals it serves from the virus. With the health and safety of volunteers in mind, between March 23 and June 1, the Food Bank temporarily cut back its volunteer program by suspending volunteer activities in its warehouse and only utilizing volunteer assistance at distribution events.

“I think volunteers were itching to come back. These people are super, super committed to this organization and when they finally got the call to come back, they came back in droves,” said Food Bank volunteer Paula Harris.

Since March 2020, volunteers have donated their time in a variety of ways including:

- Loading food into cars at drive-up distributions
- Delivering food through Doorstep Delivery, the organization’s new home delivery program for homebound individuals age 60 and over in Allegheny, Beaver and Butler counties.
- Assisting individuals with completing SNAP applications
- Packing boxes of food at the Food Bank’s sorting center
- Performing administrative skilled volunteer tasks

“Our volunteers have been incredible – wanting to plug-in, wanting to stay engaged – that has really been top priority for our volunteers so they are sometimes even volunteering two and three shifts a week, shared Charla Irwin-Buncher, chief development officer at the Food Bank. “These individuals are really committed to making sure the Food Bank has the human resources that we need in order to meet the need in the community.”

Between March 16, 2020 and February 28, 2021, the Food Bank distributed 55.2 million pounds of food, enough food for more than 46 million meals. Of that volunteers directly helped the Food Bank:

- Distribute nearly 4.3 million pounds through drive-up distributions
- Deliver more than 361,000 pounds through Doorstep Delivery
- Complete enough SNAP (food stamp) applications to result in more than 3.3 million pounds of food for applicants

Volunteer Appreciation Month at the Food Bank has been generously supported by PNC Bank, UPS and Hefren-Tillotson. To learn more about the Food Bank’s volunteer program, visit pittsburghfoodbank.org/volunteer.

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