

University of Wisconsin Milwaukee

## UWM Digital Commons

---

English 102: Community Engaged Research in  
First Year Composition

English Student Research

---

Fall 2021

### Stocking the Shelves: Milwaukee Food Banks

Anna Fronk

Follow this and additional works at: [https://dc.uwm.edu/english\\_eng102-community](https://dc.uwm.edu/english_eng102-community)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Fronk, Anna, "Stocking the Shelves: Milwaukee Food Banks" (2021). *English 102: Community Engaged Research in First Year Composition*. 13.

[https://dc.uwm.edu/english\\_eng102-community/13](https://dc.uwm.edu/english_eng102-community/13)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by UWM Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in English 102: Community Engaged Research in First Year Composition by an authorized administrator of UWM Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [scholarlycommunicationteam-group@uwm.edu](mailto:scholarlycommunicationteam-group@uwm.edu).

# STOCKING THE SHELVES

DECEMBER 2021



MILWAUKEE FOOD BANKS

Source: Stock Photo

BY ANNA FRONK



Milwaukee's Art Museum in Downtown Milwaukee  
**Source:** Stock Photo

# MILWAUKEE

Milwaukee, Wisconsin is located in eastern Wisconsin, right on the shores of Lake Michigan. It is the largest city in the state of Wisconsin and is home to more than 575,000 people.

It is well known for its professional sports teams that include the Milwaukee Brewers baseball team and the Milwaukee Bucks basketball team. The Milwaukee Bucks even won the NBA Championship in 2020.

Some other things that make Milwaukee stand out from other cities are its affordable cost of living, extensive employment opportunities, and having lots of family-friendly opportunities.

## MILWAUKEE FOOD ASSISTANCE

Milwaukee also has its struggles though just like any other city, 27.4% of people in Milwaukee live below the federal poverty line. 39.8% of those people being children.

According to the Hunger Task Force, in 2019, almost 42% of

children in Milwaukee County received food stamps from FoodShare.

In addition to all of this, the Hunger Task Force reported that 82% of Milwaukee public school students were deemed financially disadvantaged.

Milwaukee relies on food banks and donations in order to be able to feed everyone and keep the community running.



# PROBLEMS THAT ARE ASSOCIATED WITH FOOD INSECURITY

An increase in food insecurity is associated with both personal health problems as well as an increase in city wide problems.

Extensive research by the USDA has found a strong correlation between hunger and chronic illnesses. Those who suffer from food insecurity are at a higher risk for high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes.

Studies show that 58% of the households that receive food from the Feeding America network have one member with high blood pressure. And 33% have a member with diabetes.

Mental health can also be negatively effected by hunger. Even if only a couple meals are skipped, it can still impact your mental and physical health. The University of Calgary did a study that showed that students who suffer from food insecurity are even less likely to finish school.



Food insecurity in a community goes hand in hand with lack of affordable housing, social isolation, economic/social disadvantages, high medical costs, low wages and more.

Often times people will have to choose between paying bills or feeding their family. Feeding America did a study that showed that 69% of families who rely on them for food had to choose between food and utilities, while 67% had

**Source:** Stock Photo to choose between food and transportation. Families are forced to put hunger as a non-necessity and end up skipping meals as a result.

Even if they do have money to spend on groceries, it isn't a lot, so 79% of these families end up purchasing inexpensive, unhealthy food. This leads to high rates of obesity in communities with a large percent of people in poverty.





Food Donations from a Hunger Task Force Food Drive

**Source:** [hungertaskforce.org](http://hungertaskforce.org)

## FOOD BANKS

With Milwaukee being a big city, the food banks and pantries constantly are going through food. There are approximately 10 different food pantries in Milwaukee county to be able to support the community..

In addition to these food pantries there are multiple big food assistance organizations in Milwaukee. For example, the Hunger Task Force, Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin, Salvation Army, etc. With all of these food assistance options, it gives people lots of opportunities to get food. No one should have to go hungry!

Over the years, the Milwaukee food banks have gone through stages where they have

done well, where they are able to easily feed everyone and have a surplus of food, and other times where they struggle to feed everyone. There are many factors that have played a role in determining the demand for food assistance. Some of these factors include natural disasters, economic recessions, and most recently pandemics. For example, Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the economic recession of 2008/2009, and most recently the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 all caused shortages in food banks.

# THE HUNGER TASK FORCE

One of the most popular food banks in Milwaukee is called the Hunger Task Force. It was started in 1974 with a group of parents who were advocating for school breakfasts in Milwaukee Public Schools. Then in 1982, the first Food for Families food drive was held and the donations raised from the event were distributed to the local pantries. Shortly after this, the group turned into Milwaukee's first food bank (Hunger Task Force). Ever since then, the Hunger Task Force has only grown. Over the years they have been able to feed hundreds of thousands of people fresh and healthy meals. They are the only food bank in Milwaukee to not charge for food, delivery or network membership. Through the combination of government commodities, food drive donations, purchased emergency foods, and fresh produce they have grown on their farm, they are able to keep up with the demand for help.



**Top Photo:** A volunteer holding a Stockbox donation

**Source:** [hungertaskforce.org](http://hungertaskforce.org)

**Bottom Photo:** Volunteers showing some of the fresh produce from the Hunger Task Force Farm

**Source:** [hungertaskforce.org](http://hungertaskforce.org)





Source: [hungertaskforce.org](http://hungertaskforce.org)



Source: [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)



Source: [hungertaskforce.org](http://hungertaskforce.org)



Source: [hungertaskforce.org](http://hungertaskforce.org)

## WHAT THE HUNGER TASK FORCE HAS DONE:

### MOBILE MARKETS:

The Hunger Task Force in recent years has opened up two mobile markets in Milwaukee. The mobile markets are a grocery store on wheels that travel throughout Milwaukee County to visit neighborhoods and communities that have limited access to fresh and healthy foods. With the help of Piggly Wiggly they are able to offer 50% off regular grocery store prices. This eliminates any factors that have previously prevented people from being able to get access to fresh produce and food.

### THE FARM:

After realizing the gap in nutrition that the people who rely on food banks have,

the Hunger Task Force decided to open up a 208 acre farm. All the fresh produce from this farm gets donated to food banks in Milwaukee to help bridge the gap. Last year, they were able to donate over 9 million pounds of food. This farm has brought fresh food to people when previously they couldn't afford it or couldn't get access to it.

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

### STOCKBOX:

Just recently, the Hunger Task Force started a new program called Stockbox DoorDash. This program offers a home delivery option for seniors so that they are able to receive a box of free food donations straight to their door in case they are physically unable to go get food straight from the food banks. At this point in time they are able to serve up to 2,000 eligible seniors.



# COVID-19 EFFECTS

On March 13, 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic was growing in the United States and places all across the country started to shut down. This pandemic led to over 114 million people losing their jobs. People financially struggled to pay bills resulting in a record high number of people needing assistance from food banks in order to feed their families.

Kent Wainscott, a reporter with WISN, stated that the lines for the north side food pantries were growing longer

constantly because the needs were increasing each week. Things continued to get worse before they were able to get better too.

During March 2020, the Hunger Task Force found that the number of people who needed food from Milwaukee food pantries increased by 16 percent. This increase in demand caused the food banks to struggle with getting donations and volunteers on top of trying to keep up with COVID precautions.



Source: Stock Photo

## "IF YOU CAN'T FEED A HUNDRED PEOPLE, THEN JUST FEED ONE" - MOTHER THERESA

6Park NewsDesk, a local Milwaukee news station, stated that "Before the pandemic, national levels of food insecurity were at a 20-year low, according to data compiled by Feeding America, one of the largest hunger relief organizations in the United States." Since the pandemic, Feeding America has reported a 55 percent increase in people at food banks across the country.

6Park NewsDesk went on to state that, "While children are generally protected from the worst effects of food insecurity,

the pandemic made it more difficult as schools closed and millions of children lost access to free and reduced-price meals at school."

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in 2020 the amount of American children that were food insecure went up from 6.5 percent in 2019 to 7.6 percent. The amount of households with children who had food insecurity also went up from 13.6 percent in 2019 to 14.8 percent in 2020. Sadly, children took the biggest hit during the pandemic.



## THE HUNGER TASK FORCE'S RESPONSE

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hunger Task Force released a multiple page document explaining in detail how they were going to handle it, what changes were going to be made, and what precautions they were going to take.

The document stated that "In the wake of the recently declared State of Emergency, Hunger Task Force will remain open in service to seniors, low-income households and children throughout Milwaukee County." They made it

their mission to continue to serve people no matter what.

Some of the precautions they took to make sure they were stay able to continually serve the community was having volunteers and employees carry hand sanitizer, wear gloves and masks at all times, and they offered rescheduling opportunities for people who were showing COVID symptoms.

**Left Photo Source:** [hungertaskforce.org](https://hungertaskforce.org)  
**Right Photo Source:** [jsonline.com](https://jsonline.com)



# THE COMMUNITY STEPPING UP

After the pandemic hit, the community saw people struggling and stepped up. Food donations were made, people volunteered their time, and even backyard food pantries opened. People made sure that their neighbors and friends didn't go hungry.

One specific backyard food pantry, called Food is Free MKE, became so popular that a new kitchen-like storage facility was built to better support it. People would drive from all over town to donate to it. It was run completely by donations and grew like a wildfire. It was located at 56th & W Townsend St, Milwaukee, WI 53216. It helped create a judgement free zone for people who needed food but were too afraid of going to a food pantry or had already maxed out on food pantry help for that week or month.

Many organizations held food drives as well. The Hunger Task Force's annual food drive was recently held at American Family field on November 12, 2021. People were able to drive through and either make a monetary donation or drop off non-perishable food to help feed hungry families this holiday season





# MILWAUKEE BREWERS TAKE ACTION

Milwaukee professional sports teams stepped up to help feed the community as well. In particular, the Milwaukee Brewers have donated a lot to the Hunger Task Force through multiple fundraisers.

Their biggest fundraiser was when they recently partnered with Sargento Cheese. It was called Double Helping for Hungry. The arrangement to raise funds stated that for "Every time the Milwaukee Brewers hit a double during the regular season, Sargento will donate \$200 to Hunger Task Force."

People were also given the option to donate money directly to the Hunger Task Force for the fundraiser through their website.

In total, Sargento and the Brewers raised a total of \$60,000 to support local Milwaukee families going hungry.



At the end of the season there was a total of 258 doubles hit raising \$51,600. In addition to this Sargento promised to "donate \$1 for every like, retweet and comment on Twitter by Brewers™ outfielder Christian Yelich, discussing hunger in our community and the need for support." All together this came to the \$60,000 total.

Louie Gentine, the current CEO of Sargento foods stated that "We believe that real food builds stronger communities. We partner with the Hunger Task Force because of our shared belief that families should have access to nutritious food no matter who they are or where they are from. We understand the importance of the Hunger Task Force's unique free-and-local model of service and the impact it has in Southeast Wisconsin."



# DONATING

As we approach this holiday season, don't forget to do your part and donate! The Hunger Task Force and Milwaukee food banks need your help! The following list gives you options on where you can donate.

## 01 HUNGER RELIEF FUND

The Hunger Task Force has a program called the Hunger Relief fund where 100% of your online donations go towards feeding hungry people in Milwaukee.

## 03 LEND A HELPING HAM

102.9 The HOC and the Hunger Task Force continued their annual tradition this year of making it their mission for everyone to be able to have their holiday ham this Christmas. A \$15 online donation ensures that a family in need is able to enjoy a Christmas meal this year.

## 02 HOME 4 THE HOLIDAYS

The Hunger Task Force is partnering with TMJ4 to host a virtual food drive. By going to their website you are able to virtually shop for food and donate from anywhere.

## 04 VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

Donating your time is just as important as donating money or food. Food banks are in desperate need for volunteers. For more information go to [hungertaskforce.org](http://hungertaskforce.org).



Volunteers stocking some Stockboxes for delivery

**Source:** [hungertaskforce.org](http://hungertaskforce.org)