

COVID-19 Emergency Fund is A Lifeline for Community

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only been a global health crisis, it has deeply affected the financial stability and livelihood of our community members, many of whom were once solvent and are now facing underemployment or unemployment. Not to mention those individuals and families who were struggling prior to the crisis, barely scraping by with minimum-wage employment, and now find it impossible to survive. They are the new faces of hunger.

At Lunch Break, through community partners such as the Stone Foundation of New Jersey, the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund and individual contributions, we established the COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund to provide a lifeline for those in need. Applicants needs are assessed and, once approved, funds are disbursed directly for housing assistance, utilities, cable service and emergency repairs. Lunch Break has completed

Phase III of the application process with more than \$733,000 distributed since March 2020. The COVID-19 Emergency Fund is currently suspended and will be renewed in January 2021. **Please call (732) 747-8577, Ext. 3202, after Jan. 2, 2021.**

For many families, each of whom was facing homelessness, financial burdens and other challenging circumstances, this fund was a game-changer. Each was offered hope for a better tomorrow after receiving guidance and support from dedicated staff and volunteers.

Through the generosity of our donors, those burdened with financial insecurity are provided with assistance in affording life's basic necessities. Thank you for helping to continue this fund to bring a brighter future to those in desperate need.

"Thank you so much for considering to help me to pay some of my bills this month. It is overwhelming for me to be struggling with job loss as a result of COVID-19 and this helps more than you will ever know. Just so uncertain when this will clear up and I will be able to regain employment."

Donor Spotlight

Heidi Magenheimer of Shrewsbury has been a "mask angel" for several months. She's created and managed a personal drive, sewing masks of all different sizes and selling or exchanging food for them, with all proceeds benefiting Lunch Break. "It keeps me going," Heidi explains, "and it's good all around."

Heidi misses the feel-good energy of hugs from her grandchildren and tells us the mask project is keeping her positive. She is encouraged by the continued generosity of the community to help provide assistance to those in need. Thank you, Heidi!



Heidi Magenheimer

Give the Gift of Hope

Our Holiday Card is the perfect gift for your friends, family, and business clients and colleagues. When you give to Lunch Break in honor of a loved one, you give the gift of hope and comfort to a neighbor in need.

A donation of \$10 per card helps to provide meals, groceries, clothing and life skills services to thousands of families and individuals in Monmouth County and beyond. Give the gift of Hope today.

For further information:
Contact Jill Gwydir
732-747-8577, x3107
gwydir@lunchbreak.org



Children's Cooking Class "Cooking With My Hero" Goes Virtual

Prior to the pandemic, the Lunch Break kitchen was quiet between 4:30 and 6:30 p.m., all of the food neatly tucked away in refrigerators, awaiting the next day's meals. Except on Wednesdays —the night of *Chef Tracy Turi's Children's Cooking Class*. Chef Tracy's team of about 10 junior sous chefs (ages 5-12) were not only learning the fundamentals of cooking and nutrition,

but preparing delicious creations for Lunch Break's breakfast and lunch service on Thursdays.

When COVID-19 changed our lives, Lunch Break vowed to never miss a meal and met that goal with grit and grace. Non-food related programs experienced a temporary hiatus as we safely adjusted to our new reality. As the world sheltered in place, Lunch Break knew the Children's Cooking Class would adjust, especially during a time when we knew the children needed connection. Aided by Zoom, a new virtual program was born, "Cooking With My Hero."

The online cooking sessions featured a special family member demonstrating a favorite family dish, and were joined by some of the children of COVID-19 Emergency Relief. Ingredients were coordinated and delivered to the sous chefs' homes prior to the sessions. From apple pie to empanadas, the cooking class celebrated our kids, families, cultures, and healthy bodies! To view the series, go to our YouTube Channel Lynch Break NJ.

For the recipes, visit our website:
<https://lunchbreak.org/youth-programs/>



Hope Springs Into Action Donating Needed Baby Supplies to Expectant Mom

A regular and dedicated volunteer in our kitchen, Hope Perelman missed giving a helping hand when COVID-19 emerged. As weeks turned to months, it was clear that kitchen duty wouldn't be possible for some time.

Hope's altruistic nature combined with the reach of social media resulted in a movement. It all started when Hope contacted Administrative Director Millie Jeter to inquire about ways she could help out from home. Millie mentioned Jahni Rogers, a Lunch Break client expecting a baby in October in need of infant supplies. Jahni was experiencing a difficult pregnancy with the added pressure of a COVID-19-related job loss. The Life Skills team was helping Jahni to unravel the maze of unemployment and other assistance programs.

With just a few key-strokes, Hope rallied her Lincroft neighbors via a Facebook private group post. The residents of Four Ponds, Hope's community of 200 townhomes, immediately responded. Roughly 50 different families have donated gift certificates, baby clothing, diapers, wipes, even car seats and high chairs. The doubles were welcomed-- it turns out Jahni's brother is expecting a baby soon, too. The generosity and well wishes keep pouring in. At the end of September Hope planned to gather the goodies and drop them at Jahni's home in Eatontown.

One call to Lunch Break activated the love and support of many to welcome a new baby to the world!



Staff Spotlight, Client Choice Pantry



Sharon Smith

"I like the clients' smiles the most," Sharon Smith reflects on what makes her look forward to coming to work each day. Sharon works in Lunch Break's fast-paced pantry, assembling the grocery bags that fly out the back door filled with meat, fresh vegetables, dairy, canned goods and toiletries. Sharon credits Pantry Supervisor Chrissy Valkos and Intake Coordinator Taylor Oliveras for excellent training and work atmosphere.

"It's like one big family at Lunch Break," Sharon explains. She is certainly familiar with big families as the oldest of six children raised in Red Bank. Sharon has a grown son and five beautiful grandchildren. When she's not busy at Lunch Break, she loves spending time with her wonderful family, including her elderly parents. She also enjoys cooking and reading. Welcome, Sharon!



Dear Friends of Lunch Break,

“We are not going to miss a meal!” Lunch Break kept its promise to the community to not miss providing a single meal. Shifting overnight to grab-and-go and home delivered meals, our staff and volunteers ensured that our service to the community went uninterrupted.

With so many in our community facing immediate hardship, Lunch Break instituted the COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund. To date, we have distributed in excess of \$730,000 to make direct payments for the most basic necessities on behalf of our community members.

Our first ever virtual gala, led by co-chairs Mimi Keenan and Tina Pflaster, raised a significant amount of donations while also introducing many new donors to Lunch Break. Many thanks to our host Jon Stewart, who will also host our 2021 gala!

What is modern inclusivity?

Lili Portmann was an intern for Lunch Break during the summer of 2020 and shared her dream with us.

I was born with a neuromuscular disease called Spinal Muscular Atrophy Type III that affects my lower extremities. When I was younger, the doctors told my mom that I would not be able to walk, but I have proven them wrong. I use a wheelchair to get around, and leg braces and sticks walk. I always have had a “Yes, I can do anything” attitude. I do not see differences — not in myself or anyone else.

In living with a disability, I often have been treated differently, and because of this, I knew I had to help make a change. At Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida, I am studying social entrepreneurship through

the Watson Institute. My goal is to be an advocate for people with disabilities.

Throughout my schooling, there were no lessons on inclusivity and equal treatment for everyone. There are 61 million people with disabilities in the United States who are subjected to discrimination every day. As an advocate, I’d like to create a disability-inclusive program, focusing on education initiatives. I hope to make this my life’s mission.



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Happy Holidays!
Phil Antoon
President, Board of Trustees

Welcome New Board Members

Lunch Break welcomes new Board President Phil Antoon and members Robin Klein, Kevin Chieff, Rick Brodsky, Stephen Reinhard, and Eric Gatti. Each brings a wealth of professional talents, achievements and compassion for providing for the good of our community.

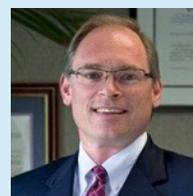
“I’m always humbled to have such phenomenal people to work with and share in this incredible journey. Our Board members give so generously of their time to help develop this organization’s capacity to not only continue its mission but to grow beyond,” said Executive Director Gwendolyn O. Love.



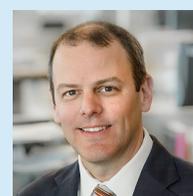
Robin Klein



Kevin Chieff



Rick Brodsky



Stephen Reinhard



Eric Gatti



COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

MARCH-NOVEMBER 2020

As the COVID-19 pandemic became a stark reality, Lunch Break decided to modify its operations in accordance with Centers for Disease Control health and safety protocols on March 16, 2020. We implemented Operation Gear-Up: We Will Not Miss A Meal pandemic response to feeding community members in need, including grab-and-go meal and contactless grocery distributions six days a week, contactless drop-off donations, and modified programs using Zoom and Google applications. Thanks to YOU, we continue to successfully operate each day and meet the growing demands of under-employed or unemployed community members struggling financially to afford life's basic necessities of food, clothing, shelter and utilities.

The Impact of YOUR Generosity

FOOD SECURITY

Grab-and-go Meals

- Thousands more over 2019, up 21%
- Serving individuals, families, at-risk communities, senior citizens, veterans, the disabled and homebound



Grocery Distribution

- Up 144% over 2019
- More than 14,000 people



FoodStock-Up Drive

- 131,000+ pounds of non-perishables collected and \$33,000+ in contributions

Adopt-A-Family for Holiday Meals

- 2,000 Holiday Meals distributed

SERVICES

Community Backpack and School Supply Distribution

- 600+ backpacks and school supplies distributed



Clothing Donations

- Clothing and business attire provided on as-needed basis
- 80+ clients received clothing
- 50+ costumes were distributed

Halloween Candy & Holiday Gift Card Distribution

- 850 clients registered for gift cards

COVID-19 EMERGENCY FUND

- \$700,000+ distributed for the payment of housing and utility bills established through the generosity of several local foundations and donors



VOLUNTEERS

- Dedicated front-line volunteers contributing 11,510 hours of service in support of Lunch Break's mission

COMMUNITY WELL-BEING & SKILLS TRAINING



Life Skills

- 12-16 monthly Virtual English as a Second Language (ESL) classes with an average of 13-19 participants
- 409-700 volunteer hours each month
- 100-215 virtual coaching sessions each month
- "Zoominar" tutorials by experts on finances, Zoom applications and resume preparation

Children's Cooking Class

- Virtual "Cooking With My Hero" sessions, including tutorial videos and demonstration on YouTube, averaging 7-12 participants



Womyn's Worth Mentoring Program

- 13 participants engaging in virtual motivational sessions focusing on well-being, self-esteem-building techniques and fellowship through journaling classes with Project Write Now and meditations for mind-body balance with Dr. Carol Penn

"I am trying to find some assistance with bills since my husband and I both lost our jobs due to COVID-19. We have children to support and are struggling to make ends meet. Thanks so much, God bless."

"Lunch Break is one of those oasis, when all seems dim and out of reach. I am so very glad we met!"

"I am so thankful for the food that Lunch Break has given me. There were times when I did not have any food to eat but soup... bless Lunch Break for giving me hope, love and a good meal."

Life Skills Provides a Lifeline for Tamara Lonon and Family

Tamara Lonon and her family looked forward to their weekly Lunch Break meal deliveries to their room at the Pan American Motel in Eatontown each Monday evening. A crew of volunteers, collaborating with local churches, sets up tables, coolers stocked with food and drinks, and in summertime, the treasured Sno cone machine. Tamara's story is a moving example of how Lunch Break offers so much more than food.

Tamara, her husband Dyron, and their four children — Dyron, Jr. (13), Dymeire (12), Yasan (10), and Kamyle (7) — spent three years living at the Pan American through a Monmouth County housing program for displaced families. Intended as a temporary shelter solution, a three-year stay in a spartan motel room was difficult for a family of six, with the added challenge of caring for their daughter, Kamyle, who has special needs.

Conversations on Monday dinner nights with volunteer coordinator Cindy Sagosz served as a great catalyst for change. Cindy, a parishioner at St. George's by-the-River Church in Rumson, is a champion for the residents at Pan American, lifting spirits and providing guidance. Cindy connected Tamara with Mary Ann LaSardo and Eleanor Herdeen at the Lunch Break Life Skills Center and a swift and inspiring journey ensued.

Within just weeks of teaming up with the Life Skills Center, Tamara was paired with Beth Fitzgerald, an amazing math tutor. Tamara is now enrolled in G.E.D. courses at



Tamara Lonon and family

Brookdale Community College, has been provided with a laptop for her studies, obtained transportation and has a new job lined up that will pay for her training once her classes are completed. Life Skills also assisted in finding an affordable apartment for the family in Eatontown, a spacious upgrade in the same school district for the children.

Tamara's hard work and impressive drive combined with Life Skills support is a refreshing force. Breaking down barriers to opportunity to enhance lives happens every day at the Life Skills Center.

Holiday Gift Card Program

Due to the pandemic, Lunch Break is hosting a Holiday Gift Card drive instead of its annual toy drive and giveaway. While we will miss the wonderful toy giveaway normally held at Tower Hill church in Red Bank, the gift card program keeps everyone safe and allows parents to purchase toys for their families. Over 800 families who are struggling financially due to the pandemic will receive the cards. Thanks to all of our supporters who contributed cards and donations, making sure hundreds of children's wishes come true!



Become a member of our Circle of Hope, a dedicated group of supporters committed to Lunch Break's Mission with annual gifts totaling \$1,000.00 or more. For further information, please contact Jill Gwydir at 732-747-8577 X3107.

Gardens Growing Faith

RBC High School Project Sows Seeds of Hope

Long before Bryan Nesci became a math and science teacher at Red Bank Catholic High School, he was a gardener. Bryan's passion for gardening began as a child in his grandfather's vegetable plot in Middletown. "It was as big as his whole yard," Bryan explains, "and I've always loved my hands in dirt."

As a result of his enthusiasm for the practical and therapeutic benefits of gardening, Bryan founded the Red Bank Catholic High School gardening club, which has grown to more than 30 members. Along with his friend Dave Desbiens, Bryan has created a mission called *Gardens Growing*

Faith. Lunch Break is the first beneficiary of Bryan's vision.

Over three weekends in August, Bryan and a small team of RBC gardeners built raised beds on Lunch Break property and planted seedlings. As a result, the first leafy greens were harvested in late September.

Gardens Growing Faith is a champion of the hyper local food movement, which translates into sourcing fruits and vegetables within a radius of 5 to 10 miles from home.

Cheers to our new garden and the freshest food possible for our Lunch Break community!

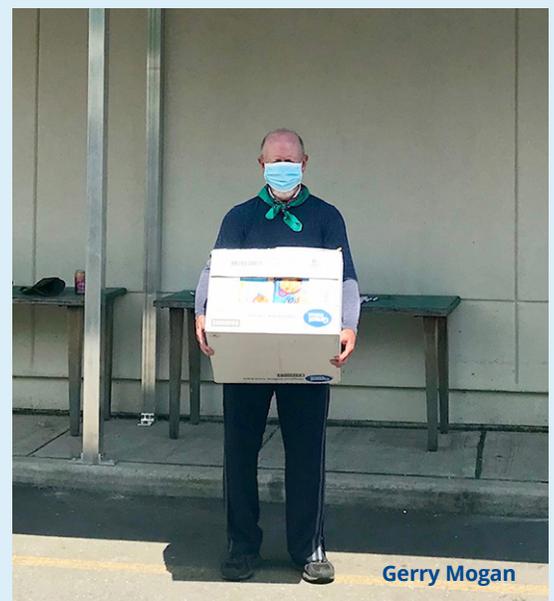


Volunteer Spotlight

When Gerry Mogan retired from a career in insurance underwriting in January, his friends advised him to find ways to keep busy. His initial plan was to stay active doing the things he loves — hiking, kayaking, and spending time outdoors. Enter the COVID-19 pandemic. Gerry's still outside most days, but the scenery is Lunch Break's food pantry drive-thru.

Since March, Gerry has reported faithfully to Lunch Break three days per week to assist in all aspects of the socially-distanced food distribution effort. He's helped thousands of people receive food and unloaded endless deliveries. When not at Lunch Break, Gerry transports food for the Meals-on-Wheels program.

Gerry has been touched by the people he has met, learning their stories and points of view. "When you open yourself up to humanity, humanity opens up to you," he explains. Thank you, Gerry!





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Double Your Gift!

Your Holiday Season gift will be matched dollar for dollar up to
\$300,000.00

by a generous Lunch Break supporter. Donate before midnight, Dec. 31st
and double your impact on our programs and services today and into the future.

Asbury Park Santa Run

The Asbury Park Santa Run is back for its fifth year and will be going fully virtual in order to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and comply with safety protocols.

Participants will be able to race anytime, anywhere and upload their time to Split Second Racing to see how they stack up against the competition. The submission window to race is December 14th-26th, 2020 (Christmas morning 5K anyone?). Registration is \$34.95. Lunch Break will receive a portion of the proceeds. To register, go to eventbrite.com and search Asbury Park Santa Run.



Please adhere to social distancing guidelines when running and use a face covering if you are with a group. For questions, please e-mail the Santa Run team at info@apsantarun.com. Happy running!

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND THANK YOU
FOR ALL YOU DO FOR LUNCH BREAK!**