

A Helping Hand

Food banks deliver food and help feed families
BY TFK KID REPORTER ELEANOR KORUM

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Every day, putting food on the table is a challenge for many Americans. They worry that they won't be able to feed their families. The slowing economy, increasing unemployment and rising food prices are contributing to the growing number of people who need help. The nation's food banks are rising to the challenge. It is estimated that they are currently serving 38% more people than they were a year ago.

"In Minnesota, the jobless rate is the highest it's been in many years," says Tricia Theurer of Second Harvest Heartland, a hunger-relief organization in Minnesota. "More and more people are needing to ask for help for emergency food, many for the first time, due to economic situations."

Second Harvest Heartland provides about 41.5 million pounds of food annually to 170,000 people in 59 counties in Minnesota and Western Wisconsin. The group is part of Feeding America, the nation's food-bank network. Its members include 205 food banks serving every county in the United States.



COURTESY KORUM FAMILY

TFK Kid Reporter Eleanor Korum visits Second Harvest Heartland.

Hunger in America

Hunger affects children, adults and seniors. It affects those who live in the city, in the suburbs and in rural areas. It affects those who do not have jobs and the working poor.

The working poor are the fastest growing group of food-bank clients. They are employed, but simply do not have enough income to buy enough food to feed their families.



COURTESY KORUM FAMILY

Volunteers fill boxes at a Second Harvest Heartland distribution center in Minnesota.

Many people rely on food banks in their neighborhood to provide them with food. Relief organizations provide cereal, pasta, canned foods, juices, cold food, frozen food, fresh fruit and vegetables and bread. Manufacturers, restaurants, grocery stores and schools, which have too much food and don't want it to go to waste, make donations. Food is also collected through fund drives.

You Can Help

Kids and adults can participate together in the fight to end hunger. The money you donate to the food bank may seem like too small an amount to make a difference, but a simple \$1 donation can be used to distribute more than \$9 worth of food. "Kids can be very creative in coming up with ideas of how to help others," says Theurer. "Some kids run lemonade stands, others have asked [party] guests to contribute food or money to Second Harvest instead of presents."

General Mills and the television show The Biggest Loser have teamed up to raise funds for Feeding America through the Pound for Pound Challenge. Go to www.feedingamerica.org to learn more about hunger, what you can do to help in your area and the Pound For Pound Challenge. My school has taken on the Pound For Pound Challenge—maybe yours will too!!

Review Questions:

- 1) What are three reasons that many Americans struggle with feeding their families?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

- 2) Who are the **working poor**?

- 3) To be **food secure** means to have food available at all times, to have access to food at all times, and to be able to make use of food at all times. To be **food insecure** means you lack one of those three things (availability, access, or use). Figures in the table below are from www.frac.org.

Percent of Americans who are Food Insecure by Year	
2000	31 million
2001	33.6 million
2002	34.9 million
2003	36.3 million
2004	38.2 million

- 4) How many more millions of Americans were food insecure in 2004 than in 2000?

- 5) In 2008, 49.1 million Americans were food insecure. By how much has this number increased since 2004? Why do you think there has been such a large increase in the past 2 years?