
Onion-Tossing 101: MEND March 2024 Newsletter

1 message

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Happy **National Nutrition Month!**

Here at MEND, we celebrate year-round by including simple and nutritious recipes (in both English and Spanish) at mobile markets and in home delivery packages - and by sharing them out monthly

with food pantry leaders. Here's a recent one:

Recipe: Potato, Black Bean & Kale Skillet

One of the most common ingredients (and most requested produce items from the pantries) is onions! Recently, MEND's warehouse team was seen tossing 50 lb. bags of onions like it's nothing, as they loaded up the Sweet Pea van!

And speaking of vehicles - thanks to generous grants from the Community FoodBank of NJ and the Sisters of Saint Joseph, Chestnut Hill, MEND will soon be purchasing a new box truck to complement the Sweet Pea!

Please read on for the latest updates, and, as always, [reach out](#) if you'd like to chat about the difference you are making in your community - you are essential to this work!

Robin Peacock
Executive Director

MEND Network News: Pantry Partnerships



Local food pantry leaders came together earlier this month to meet at Our Lady of Sorrows Food Pantry in South Orange.

The highlight of the meeting was the **Pantry Spotlights**, where managers shared details, stories and insights from their pantry's operations with colleagues.



Cynthia, manager at **Holy Trinity Episcopal Church** in West Orange, shared a video she made, and spoke about the continued increase in new people seeking help. *In 2019, the pantry served 7,000 people. In 2023, the pantry served over 37,000 patrons.* Holy Trinity has several long-time clients, including senior citizens, some to whom they deliver food via jitney in collaboration with the township.



Hend, manager at **pantry+** located at Rutgers University, Newark, spoke about food insecurity among college students. See her chart, below.

Pantry+ shares fun and easy recipes with students, and hosts cooking workshops and food sampling sessions with the campus dietitian, called "Try it Tuesdays."

Food insecurity rate nationwide is 12.8% (~17 million households).

The 2022 prevalence rates for both food insecurity and very low food security were statistically significantly higher than the rates recorded in 2021.



Most estimates of college food insecurity are close to 30%.



A recent survey of Rutgers-Newark students found that approximately 47% of students were experiencing food insecurity (November 2022).



Take the MEND Supporter Survey!

You are vital to MEND's mission of increasing access to fresh and healthy food in our community - and so is your feedback!

Please share your thoughts by answering this [brief survey](#).



Food-Raising and Fundraising Highlights

Chili Cookoff Raises \$20K!

This fan favorite community event, created by Maplewood resident Tom Mason and his team, sold out in a matter of hours! 50 Chili Chefs, 12 Community Sponsors, and over 300 Tasters came together to raise over \$20K!

While MEND was the real winner, the following teams were First Place finishers:

- Meat: James McDuffee and Jennifer Grady for *Hank Chiliams Jr.* (repeat champs!)
- Veggie: Michael Schwartz and Bob Liano for *Extreme Vegetative State*
- Kids: Lucas Tarry and Ali McCracken

[Read the Article](#)



Cereal-ously Supporting MEND!

Maplewood resident Everett recently collected nearly 100 boxes of cereal - a most wanted item! - to support the Lynne & Don Blaesser Food Pantry as his Bar Mitzvah project. In addition to the cereal boxes he collected, Everett's family and friends donated over \$2,000 to stock the pantry's shelves!

[Host Your Own Food Drive!](#)



10 Days of 10Ks

Onion-tossing not your thing?

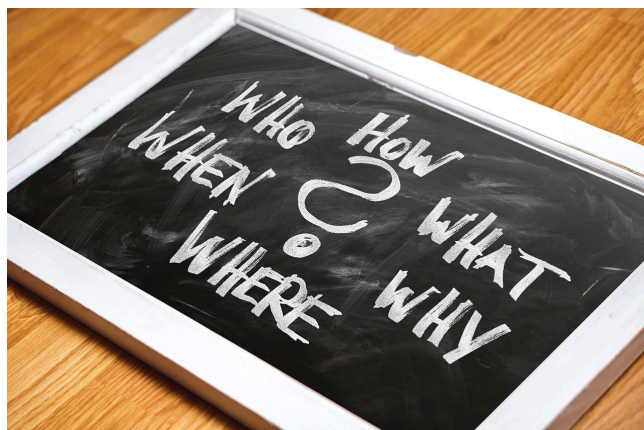
No worries - here's another fun option: Now in its 7th year, 10 Days of 10Ks returns from July 12th through July 21st!

All levels are welcome, and every step makes a difference!

Save Your Spot for 10x10!



Volunteer Opportunities



MEND Story Corps

Have you always wanted to be a reporter? Now's your chance!

MEND Story Corps volunteers will help collect stories from the MEND network. No formal experience needed. [Email for more info!](#)



Other Ways to Help

Volunteer at the Hub or lend a hand at a food pantry or mobile market! Weekday availability preferred.

Sign Me Up!

Besides these opportunities, we can always use extra help with fundraising, outreach, and general operations! If this is of interest to you, [let us know!](#)

Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) Updates

Pass Improvements to the Child Tax Credit

[Call on your Senators](#) to pass the Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act and reject any amendments that could limit the impact of the Child Tax Credit for families struggling to put food on the table. This would include opposing amendments that would weaken or eliminate the “lookback” provision, which provides key flexibility for families with low incomes who might experience fluctuations in earnings due to circumstances such as economic hardship or caregiving needs. Learn more in this [national anti-hunger organization letter](#).



New USDA Report on Summer EBT Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) new report released this week, [*Evaluation of the USDA Summer EBT Demonstrations: Lessons Learned From More Than a Decade of Research*](#), finds that Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT): reduces childhood food insecurity by a significant amount, including the most severe form of food insecurity; promotes a healthy diet; and parents and caregivers have positive opinions of the program.



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