



## **Our 6-week update: 4.25.20**

During the summer of 2019, Claridon Community Helps implemented a new program, *Now That's What I'm Talking About!* Summer Lunches as a way to combat food insecurity for families in our community. The program served free lunches to children in the area covered by the Berkshire School District while they were on their summer break, providing meals to families no matter their financial situation. After a successful first season of the program we moved into 2020, and plans were made to expand not only the area to cover the Berkshire School District, but the Cardinal School District as well for the summer.

On Thursday, March 12, Governor DeWine ordered schools to be closed for three weeks, beginning the following Monday. Within hours of his announcement, we had contacted Berkshire and Cardinal Schools to let them know that beginning Monday, March 16 we would be offering lunches to children, just like we did last summer. With this unexpected change to in-person learning, we wanted to make sure children were able to have food consistently from the start.

On Friday morning, one of our volunteers from last summer who lives in Newbury let us know they were available to deliver lunches to children in that area, if needed. Newbury ranks number 3 in children receiving free/reduced lunch with 30%. We contacted Newbury Schools to let them know about our program.

On Friday afternoon, Josephine Culliton, Food Service Director of Chardon Schools, contacted us to see if we could help provide lunches for Chardon children as well. The answer was "Absolutely!", with our only concern being the number of volunteers we would need to deliver the lunches.

## **Number of Registered Children Receiving Lunch**

Monday, March 16 there were 51 children registered to receive lunches. These children were in Thompson, Montville, Claridon, Burton, Troy and Middlefield. Newbury School District would be taking care of the children in Newbury on their own. Chardon School District was still working out the logistics and Cardinal School District would be using their staff to deliver breakfast and lunch to 200 children each day.

By Week 2 of school being out, Josephine of Chardon Schools had worked with the community and implemented a plan. Freedom Alliance Church in Hambden would be taking care of the children in Hambden. Chardon Christian Fellowship would be taking care of the children in Chardon. Morning Star Friends Church would be taking care of the children in the Munson area. The churches in Hambden and Chardon would be taking care of the food for their lunches. *Now That's What I'm Talking About!* would provide the lunches for Morning Star Friends Church to distribute.

At the beginning of Week 6, Monday April 20, Morning Star Friends Church merged their students together with the children being served by Chardon Christian Fellowship. We would no longer be making their lunches.

Over the past 6 weeks the number of lunches provided per day has grown from 51 to 156. The number of children we will be making lunches for on Monday, April 27 is 119. Bringing our total number of lunches served in 6 weeks to 3,556.

## **Available Food**

During the summer of 2019, it was easy to go to the store and purchase food in bulk for the lunches we were preparing. Six weeks ago, purchasing food in bulk was not easy. Fortunately, Claridon Community Helps had meat in the freezer that we had purchased for our monthly community dinners. We also had canned chicken that New Mercies Community Church had given us. The Rotary Club of Burton – Middlefield gave us the milk and orange juice they had purchased for pancake breakfasts which were now cancelled. Berkshire Schools gave us their milk and fresh produce that would expire before school was scheduled to resume in three weeks. Finding enough bread, eggs and vegetables was challenging that first week, but we made it through!

Last summer, the first year of our program, multiple trips were made weekly to purchase the items needed for lunches. With the Governor's orders to only go out when necessary due to the Coronavirus, multiple trips to the store each week would now need to change.

A friend of the family is the manager of Dave's Markets in Cleveland. We are able to order most of the food we need through them. Meat and lunchmeat are ordered and purchased weekly at Heritage Meats in Middlefield. Individual cartons of milk are purchased from Heinen's in Chardon. Great Lakes Growers provides fresh lettuce to us each week free of charge. Geauga Hunger Task Force local food pantry also gives us food when they have an abundance that would otherwise go to waste before they can get it out to families. Local families have also donated food items. One family even gave us a case of toilet paper back in week 2 to share with families.

## **Supplies**

With the increased number of children and delivery locations from last year, we purchased additional insulated delivery bags.

In the summer of 2019 University Hospitals, Geauga gave us the tin containers we used to put our hot meals in. So far this year we have needed to buy those containers. We also purchase containers to serve our fresh salads on Wednesdays.

We have always worn gloves and sanitized all the work areas. Additionally, this year we have needed to purchase masks and thermometer covers. We go through a lot more of the hard to find cleaning supplies as we sanitize our work space.

We are blessed to work with Claridon Congregational Church to bring lunches to children. It has been probably close to 30 years since the church worked so hard to raise the funds needed to expand the kitchen to the size it is today. Therefore, the commercial grade equipment in the kitchen is approximately 30 years old. This equipment includes 2 double door refrigerators, a commercial range and a dishwasher.

Of the 2 double door commercial refrigerators, one no longer works and the other one never quits working meaning it runs constantly. When I say

constantly, I mean to the tune of raising the electric bill \$200 a month when it was plugged in last summer. We were in the process of raising money for a new refrigerator before the schools began their summer break this year, but the need for lunches came early thanks to COVID19, and the money was not raised before we started.

The range works wonderfully. We have never had a problem with it in the 8 years we have been using the kitchen for our community dinners. The dishwasher needed repair last summer. A few weeks ago, it needed to be repaired again. It is working and we know eventually it will need to be replaced.

### **Number of Children Registered:**

Burton – 9 families totaling 23 children

Claridon (Chardon School District) – 5 families totaling 14 children

Claridon (Berkshire School District) – 6 families totaling 15 children

Huntsburg – 1 family with 3 children

Middlefield – 10 families totaling 31 children

Montville – 11 families totaling 22 children

Thompson – 11 families totaling 30 children

Troy – 1 family with 3 children

Windsor – 1 family with 2 children

Total 55 families totaling 143 registered children

### **Volunteers**

*Now That's What I'm Talking About!* - Summer Lunches is a Claridon Community Helps program. This program as with the organization is a 100% volunteer program.

Last summer we had 96 wonderful volunteers, of which 50 of them were students. We believe the more volunteers the better. But during this time, we are taking the opposite approach and using the minimum number of volunteers to get the lunches out the door to the children. Hopefully before the school year begins in the fall, we will be able to increase the number of volunteers each day.

To date, we have 28 different volunteers including staff members of Berkshire School District. Our volunteers have given 524 hours of their time, additionally they provide the transportation of the lunches.

## **Income: The first 6 weeks**

We started the year in the black, with a \$3,300 carryover from last summer. To date we have received \$15,275.26, which includes grant money to purchase a new refrigerator and freezer. This brings our total monetary donations to use strictly for this program to \$18,575.26.

## **Expenses: The First 6 Weeks**

Total expenses \$14,178.3

Food expense \$7,204.81

Supplies \$6973.49

Largest expense was the purchase of a new double door commercial refrigerator and a single door commercial freezer totaling \$4,608. We have received grants from Hope for Kids and the Cleveland Foundation to purchase these items.

A huge expense that is not food related, are the containers we purchase to put the hot lunches in. We cannot use a clamshell container, as the food leaks out of the containers and all over the other lunches in the insulated delivery bag. We use divided tin containers with lids that we seal. To date we have spent \$1,264.77 on these containers and we have enough to last approximately 4 more weeks.

Last year University Hospitals Geauga donated these containers to us. We haven't been able to make the connection with them this year, but we are working with a local restaurant to see if they will assist us in ordering the containers to save on the shipping cost.

The third largest expense in supplies was the purchase of insulated delivery bags, which cost us \$398. If our numbers increase dramatically, we will need to purchase additional bags.

## **Moving Forward**

Cardinal Schools will end their lunch program at the end of the school year, May 26. They are currently serving 200 children a day. Will all of these children sign up for our lunch program? We are not sure! But we are

expecting a large portion to sign up with us. Cardinal School District has 42% of their students receiving free/reduced lunches, which is the highest percentage of students in the county.

Each week we have additional children who are registered for the lunch program and we expect to see the number continue to grow throughout the summer.

For the past six weeks we have averaged \$1,200 spent on just food. This is less than the estimated \$3.21 per meal that we estimated or an average of \$1,900 per week. Our donations are larger than our expenses to date by \$4,396.96. Assuming we will continue to receive food donations from the local food pantries and individuals, we have enough money to serve lunch for the next 4 weeks.

School is scheduled to resume the week of August 17<sup>th</sup> which is 16 weeks away. We plan on continuing to serve lunch to children until school resumes, whether it be in August or a later date.

### **How can you help?**

This program is for all children, no matter what! Regardless of their circumstance, their family's income level, or what school they attend during the year, all are welcome and eligible to receive our lunches!

To continue doing the work we do, we are asking for your support in two ways:

1. Please share the word with your friends and neighbors about our program!
2. Second, we need your support through donations! On our website you can find a list of food items we are in need of by donation, or through financial support mailed to us.

Thank you in advance!



Now That's What I'm Talking About – Summer Lunch