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Thanksgiving in July helps stave off summer hunger

The school year has come to a close and more than 18 million American children will lose access to the free and reduced-price meals they depend on for nourishment. Families with already overextended budgets are forced to make up for lost school meals. The Crisis Center of Johnson County Food Bank and food banks across the country feel this increased need for food assistance to support children and their families who

live on the brink of hunger during the summer.

Feeding America's recently released study, Map the Meal Gap 2016, found that food-insecurity rates among households with children are substantially higher than those found in the general population. In Johnson County the food-insecurity rate is 14 percent, or 19,320 people. The number of food-insecure children in the county, however, is slightly higher at 16 percent or nearly 4,500 children under the age of 18.

"A child who is inadequately nourished is at high risk of experiencing poor health, and cognitive and physical impairments, leading to difficulties in school and later in life," according to Diana Aviv, CEO of Feeding America. "During the summer months, children should be hungry for play and learning and not for food."

Of the 22 million American children

who receive free or reduced-price school meals during the school year, five out of six will not be able to access meal programs during the summer due to a number of barriers. Lack of school buses to transport children to and from summer meal sites can be extremely challenging. Children may have to travel long distances to a summer meal site or need to cross busy streets or unsafe areas. For millions of vulnerable children summer is a time of hunger and worry.

The Crisis Center is battling hunger this summer with our Thanksgiving in July food drive brought to you by Hills Bank & Trust Company. Our goal this summer is to stock our shelves with 80,000 pounds of food. Through our fundraising efforts, we are hoping to be able to purchase this food for pennies on the dollar. We are also asking for individuals and groups

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Don't forget to donate your fruits and vegetables!

Over the past decade, study after study has shown that eating healthy can be very difficult for those living in poverty. Healthy food is more expensive and often more difficult to access, especially for those living in food deserts.

According to the USDA's Food Access Research Atlas, Johnson County has four areas that qualify as food deserts. A food desert is defined as a low-income area where a substantial number of residents have low access to a supermarket or large grocery store. This means that anyone in urban Johnson County who lives more than a mile from a grocery store or anyone in rural Johnson County who lives more than 10 miles from a grocery store is likely living in a food desert.

"People living in food deserts are often forced to shop at convenience stores, which are more expensive and have very few options for fresh foods," said Sarah Benson Witry, Food Bank and Emergency Assistance Director.

Even if someone living in poverty does not live in a food desert, fresh fruits and vegetables are often cost-prohibitive. In the recent report released by the Johnson County Hunger Task Force, pantry clients identified access to more fresh fruits and vegetables as something they want to see at their local pantry.

This is why The Crisis Center Food Bank has designated more than \$30,000 annually towards the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables.

"Our clients are so happy about the amount of fresh produce we're able to provide," said Food Bank Coordinator Jessica Morris. "It also makes us feel better to provide healthier options."

Not having access to healthy foods can lead to a number of health issues, including obesity.

"We know that making healthier foods available to our clients can have a major impact on their health," Morris said. "One client said she lost 40 pounds in the year she has been visiting the food bank because she's finally able to eat healthier. She is so grateful, not only for the health reasons, but because healthy food tastes better."

We can't meet all the need, though, which is why we need you! Local growers and hobby gardeners are encouraged to donate their extra produce to The Crisis Center Food Bank. To provide our clients with the most wholesome food possible, please only donate produce that you would enjoy eating

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Top left: UNFI (United Natural Foods Inc.) employees helped us to repackage a load of baby products!



Top right: George lost his father to suicide and he speaks to local groups and the media about his experience. He was recognized at our Volunteer Banquet.



Bottom right: Hawkeye great and former NFL player Tim Dwight teamed up with the Crisis Center to hold a food drive at his football camp. Attendees and donors contributed 147 pounds of food for the Food Bank.

Share your photos.
Caring is contagious! Snap a photo of your Crisis Center food drive or fundraiser so we can share it with the community. Send photos to admin@jccrisiscenter.org

It's going to be a hot one! Have you joined the Fan Club yet?

Abigail is a child who suffers from asthma. While she plans to have a lot of fun this summer, the sweltering heat and humidity may trigger asthma symptoms such as coughing and shortness of breath. Her family struggles to make ends meet and they lack the funds to purchase a fan, let alone turn on air conditioning. Thanks to the donation of a Fan Club member, she received a box fan and can now get a restful night's sleep.

Individuals in crisis don't have access to the basic amenities most of us have, and this can make hot summers especially

hazardous. Sarah Benson Witry, Food Bank and Emergency Assistance Director explains, "Iowa's hot, humid summers can be unpleasant and sometimes dangerous. Young children, the elderly, and people with health conditions can be at risk when the temperatures get high. A fan can make a big difference in keeping people safe and comfortable."

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicts a hot summer, so it will be important to take necessary precautions this year. For the past seven years, The Crisis Center has been helping

people like Abigail, and other individuals by distributing box fans during the summer months. Since 2010, the Fan Club has provided 2,025 families with box fans. The overall goal this summer is to raise \$10,000 in order to meet demand for this important resource.

While the Crisis Center is unable to accept fan donations, a \$20 contribution covers the cost of one box fan for a family. Donations can be made online, by mail, or in person. Consider becoming a member of the Fan Club, and help keep Iowans safe this summer!



Volunteers, Beverly and Marilyn, distributed the first load of box fans purchased through our Fan Club program. It's not too late to contribute! Just \$20 buys a box fan for a family in need this summer.



A Note From The Director

Since the Mobile Crisis Outreach Program's inception just over a year ago, our Director of Crisis Intervention Services, Keri Neblett, has worked tirelessly to manage the program and serve as a mobile crisis counselor, in addition to all her other duties. Due to the excellent training Keri and others provided law enforcement in the county, we have been receiving higher than anticipated call volume. In fact, just last month, we had three calls in 15 minutes. Though



the Johnson County Sheriff's Office has helped to staff our response team, Keri needed even more help!

So at the end of January, we submitted a proposal for \$70,352 to fund half of two full-time employees: a mobile crisis coordinator and a mobile crisis follow-up counselor. This was through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA).

In May, we received notice from the Iowa Attorney General's office that we were awarded full funding for our proposal!

This is a 3-year funding agreement and will help us continue to grow the program. In just the first year of operation, our mobile crisis counselors responded to 57 individuals in crisis and spent four days at

Coral Ridge Mall after the tragic shooting last year. While there we counseled more than 100 individuals, mostly mall employees, who witnessed the shooting.

The Mobile Crisis Outreach Program is an invaluable resource in our community. We are working closely with law enforcement throughout the county to save valuable officer time, as well as ensuring those who are in crisis are receiving the proper care and attention they need.

Thank you so much for your continued support and for being such a strong member of The Crisis Center family!

Becci Reedus
Executive Director, The Crisis Center of Johnson County

Upcoming Events

Thanksgiving in July Community-Wide Food Drive
Host a food drive to help The Crisis Center Food Bank stock its shelves this summer! Contact Sarah Benson Witry at 319-351-2726 ext. 118 to learn more.

Join the Fan Club through August
Just \$20 allows us to purchase fans for people in need during the hot and humid months of summer. Join the Fan Club today!



Spotlight on Community Thursday, September 1
Join us to help raise funds for two community organizations: The Crisis Center of Johnson County & the Iowa City Community Theater. For more information, call Sara Sedlacek at 319-351-2726 ext. 108.

National Suicide Prevention Month Annual Event feat. Kevin Briggs
Thursday, September 8
6:30 p.m. at the Medical Education Research Facility in Iowa City

Out of the Darkness Walk
Sunday, September 11
at the Terry Trueblood Recreation Area
Registration at 5 p.m.
Walk begins at 6 p.m.

Connect with us

The best way to keep up with The Crisis Center's activities and events is subscribing to the monthly e-news at

www.jccrisiscenter.org

You can also connect with The Crisis Center elsewhere online:

Facebook.com/jccrisiscenter
Twitter.com/crisiscenterjc

National Suicide Prevention Month Event: An Evening with the "Guardian of the Golden Gate"

Earlier this year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released new data showing a rise in suicide rates, especially among young girls. This troubling news led staff at The Crisis Center of Johnson County to redouble its outreach efforts and remind the public that there are resources for those in need.



Kevin Briggs
Author and speaker on suicide prevention, crisis intervention, and leadership

One exciting new outreach effort is in partnership with the University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics. September is National Suicide Prevention Month and each year The Crisis Center welcomes a speaker to talk about suicide prevention. This September, The Crisis Center has partnered with UIHC to bring Kevin Briggs to Iowa City.

Briggs was a member of the California Highway Patrol with an often dark, yet strangely rewarding job: He patrolled the southern end of San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, a popular site for suicide attempts. Throughout his 23-year career, Briggs has negotiated several hundred people from suicide on the Golden Gate

Bridge. As someone who suffers from depression himself, Briggs reminds those suffering depression or other mental illnesses that there is hope. To those who do not suffer from mental illness, Briggs simply asks that everyone reach out to someone who might be at risk for suicide. His mantras are "We are in this together" and "Listen to understand".

Briggs has written a book, *Guardian of the Golden Gate: Protecting the Line Between Hope and Despair*, and has a TED Talk that has been viewed more than 2 million times. He has spoken all over the world about suicide prevention, crisis management, and leadership, and we are very honored to have him as The Crisis Center's speaker for this year's Suicide Prevention Month event.

The event will be held Thursday, Sept. 8, at 6 p.m. at the University of Iowa Medical Education Research Facility, 375 Newton Rd. Dr. James Potash, Head of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Iowa, will introduce Briggs and talk briefly about the state of mental health and suicide prevention locally. Following the event, will be a book signing. Briggs's book will be available for purchase at the event. The event is open to the public and all are welcome.

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to host food drives. Hills Bank & Trust Company has already pledged its support to help us reach our goal and we hope others in the community will follow their generous lead.

If you would like to donate please visit www.jccrisiscenter.org to make an online donation or mail your gift to: 1121 Gilbert Ct., Iowa City, IA 52240. For each dollar

we receive, we are able to purchase four pounds of food. We can make your dollar go farther, but we are also looking to the community for variety in our warehouse. You can find out more about hosting a food drive by visiting our website or contacting Sarah Benson Witry at 319-351-2726 ext. 118. You can help make a difference this summer.

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yourself, that is in good condition and free of mold, rodents and insects. Donations can be brought to the Food Bank at 1121 Gilbert Court in Iowa City weekdays between 8:30 AM and 5:00 PM. For

additional information, contact Sarah Benson Witry, Food Bank and Emergency Assistance Director, at (319) 351-2726 ext. 118.