

Stock the shelves

With the holidays around the corner, local food pantries need you

CLOSING IN ON ITS THIRD AND FINAL YEAR of the “Close the Gap” campaign, the **North Texas Food Bank (NTFB)** is working hard to provide 50 million meals to hungry families by July 2011 (the end of their fiscal year). The nonprofit hunger-relief organization distributes food through 1,184 programs in 13 North Texas counties, including Collin County.

Brad Wendling, NTFB Senior Manager, Agency Relations, said that as of last year, 44,895 people in Collin County live in poverty. Compared to other North Texas counties (Dallas’ poverty rate is 16.8 percent), Collin’s poverty rate is low at 6.5 percent. However, we can’t ignore the 44,895 individuals living in poverty here.

Said Wendling, “The community can help in four ways. One, give your time—volunteer with us by e-mailing volunteer@ntfb.org. Two,



Plano Food Pantry volunteer **Amanda Goodwin** shows there’s always room for more food donations. Profile photos/Brit Mott

give your voice—contact our elected officials and tell them that hunger is unacceptable. Three, give a pound—host a traditional or a virtual food drive. Four, give a dollar—one dollar equals four meals.”

While the U.S. government has declared the recession is over,

Did you know that just \$1 equals four meals? And now, the need is greater than ever.

nonprofit agencies have asked media outlets, like *Plano Profile*, to spread the word: *The need is greater than ever.*

Last fiscal year (July 1, 2009–June 30, 2010), the NTFB provided access to almost 45 million meals through its efforts—7.7 million meals more than the previous year. And, according to a 2010 study called “Hunger in America” by Feeding America, the number of *children* NTFB serves has increased 2 percent in the last four years, which means almost 40 percent of those served by the NTFB are children.

The NTFB has several programs that cater to children. Two are **Kids Cafe** and **Food 4 Kids**. Kids Cafe provides a hot meal to children in after-school programs. It provided over 321,445 meals to more than 1,500 children last year. Food 4 Kids is a backpack program where children receive a backpack of food on a Friday to take home for the weekend. The cost of a backpack is a little over \$5. In the 2009–2010 school year, the NTFB provided 278,252 backpacks to hungry kids.

This year, both Kids Cafe and Food 4 Kids programs were extended to provide backpacks of food to hungry children over the summer. In an

eight-week period, 2,254 Food 4 Kids backpacks were distributed and 8,778 Kids Cafe backpacks were distributed.

Does NTFB work with local farmers markets or restaurants? Wendling explained that it does: “The **Charitable Produce Center** is designed to transform the large amount of waste in the fresh produce market into a source of nourishment for hungry North Texans,” he said. “We also have a retail pickup program, a collaboration between the North Texas Food Bank and local grocers who donate short-dated products such as meat, baked goods, and produce for quick delivery to member agencies. The program is currently averaging 117,185 meals a month that might otherwise go to waste.”

Waste. So much food goes to waste over the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. When we’re “stuffing” ourselves with turkey, creamed potatoes and corn, Wendell’s words of advice are “Remember those less fortunate. One dollar equals four meals.” Visit ntfb.org.

Plano food drives

There are two major food drives in Plano each year—the **Boy Scouts** drive in February and the **USPS Letter Carriers** drive in May—and the food is brought to the **Plano Food Pantry**. A member agency of the North Texas Food Bank, the Plano Food Pantry is located at 2200 18th St.

“The pantry works with the **Assistance Center of Collin County** to screen clients and provide meals to families living within the Plano school district,” said **Sharon Macduff**, director of the pantry. “It is run by volunteers who work hard to keep the shelves stocked.”

The pantry relies on 43 volunteers who sort, store, and distribute the food. Volunteer **Amanda Goodwin** said with enthusiasm, “We could use some young muscle.” Boxes of food are stacked to the ceiling in the pantry’s warehouse.



Doug Garber explained that as soon as they receive food, they sort it into the boxes by food group and date the box. That way, by the time an order is fulfilled, the food doesn’t go bad. “We take orders between 4–5 p.m. on weekdays. If an individual or family does not have an order in, we never let them go hungry, never,” he said. “We’ll find them food until they can get an order in.”

The Plano Food Pantry began in a small alcove of the Episcopal Church on 18th Street in the late ’60s. It was soon apparent that the tiny space was too small to serve the number of families in need, so in 1987, a 2,500-square-foot building was constructed with a grant from the Meadows Foundation and individual donations. Refrigerators and freezers were added, making it possible to store perishable food items.

If you wish to volunteer or donate food, call 214.704.5689 or 972.424.4574.



From left: Plano Food Pantry board members **Bill Shrewsbury** and **Ina Garber** with volunteers **Doug Garber** and **Amanda Goodwin**, board member **Margie Shrewsbury**, and volunteer **Pace Goodwin**.

Food pantries near you

These local food pantries will greatly appreciate your support! For locations and hours, please contact the pantry or visit planoprofile.com.

Allen Ministerial Alliance Food Pantry
972.727.1177 • allenfoodpantry.org

Christian Benevolent Outreach
972.423.2950 • willowcreekfellowship.org

Community Food Pantry of McKinney
972.547.4404 • mckinneyfoodpantry.org

First Baptist Church–Allen Food Pantry
214.869.2638 • fbcallen.org

Frisco Family Services Center
972.335.9495 • friscocenter.org

God’s Food Pantry
972.633.9777 • godsfoodpantry.com

Minnie’s Food Pantry
972.596.0253 • minniesfoodpantry.com

Plano Food Pantry
214.704.5689 or 972.424.4574

Seven Loaves Food Pantry
469.385.1813 or 972.380.8001
standrewumc.org

Society of St. Vincent De Paul Food Pantry
972.562.1107

This is not a complete list of food pantries in Collin County. Also, note that many pantries are closed on major holidays.