



The Berkshire Food Project seeks to alleviate hunger, food insecurity, and social isolation by serving healthy, no cost meals and connecting people to other resources, all in a dignified and respectful manner.

A Conversation About Eating Contests

We recently benefitted from the annual Jack's Hot Dog Eating Contest on Eagle Street when City Councilor Keith Bona asked for pledges for every hot dog he ate, which he would donate to the Berkshire Food Project.

We received over \$2,000 in donations from our local community as well as donors from Texas, Pennsylvania and other places. This was a terrific boost to our bank account and we are quite grateful to Keith for thinking of this unique and successful fundraising opportunity.

It also got people talking. Should the BFP support eating competitions when there are families in need of food? The question was posed to our Board of Directors, our peers and colleagues at a food security meeting, staff at the Food Bank of Western MA and many people in our dining room. It led to conversations on iBerkshireTV as well as **Something You Should Know** (airing Sundays at 7 on Northern Berkshire Community Television).

As the FBWMA staff pointed out, there's enough food for everyone, it's a matter of getting the available food to the people who need it. So, those hot dogs getting eaten at a hot dog eating contest really don't have any impact on our local families in need being able to access hot dogs if they want them. And as one of our colleagues pointed out at a recent meeting, who are we to judge how somebody else celebrates and competes, even if it is in a food eating contest? And finally, will the \$2,225 raised by Keith Bona do any less good work because it was motivated by his awareness raising participation in an annual hot dog eating contest?

The funds raised by this recent contest, however, more than covers the cost of providing every diner in our dining room with a package of hot dogs and rolls, should they want them. And it is nearly a year's worth of our utilities bills. Two months of payroll expense for our kitchen assistant position. In other words, this is not an insignificant amount of money. Ultimately, the awareness raising, the food we can purchase and share with hungry families and the opportunity to chat with local media far outweigh the cost of the 20 hot dogs that Keith ate to win the 2019 title of Jack's Hot Dogs Hot Dog Eating Contest Winner.

We don't ever like to see food wasted when it can be shared with hungry people - but in this particular instance, the positive outcomes really added up. We spent no money and provided no hot dogs or buns to the event - whether or not we benefitted, the competition would have happened.

North Adams has gotten some promotion too - the LA Beast's youtube video featuring the competition has been seen over 400,000 times and already Jack's has seen new customers coming in just because of the video.



North Adams City Councilor Keith Bona accepts our letter of thanks as he drops off the pledges he received in support of the Berkshire Food Project. When all was said and done, he raised \$2,225! Thank You Councilor Bona!



Let us know what you think - e-mail us at info@berkshirefoodproject.org or message us on



Our Entrance

Our diners enter through the breezeway between the First Congregational Church and the building to the west. If you enter these doors from the Summer Street side, as most of our diners do, you will find a beautiful garden area. Throughout the summer the flowers bloom and welcome all. This is the work of one of our volunteers who also happens to be a member of the First Congregational Church too. **Erika Uchman** not only works hard in our kitchen two days a week, but she spends endless hours in the garden.

THANK YOU ERIKA!

We serve lunch every weekday from noon until 1 PM. Our doors open at 11:30 AM for snacks and beverages. There is NO criteria and no questions asked. Join us any weekday!

Are you coming from Williamstown?

You can arrange A FREE ROUNDTRIP RIDE any Tuesday or Thursday. Call by Monday of the week during which you want a ride - 413-458-9831. Tell the operator you want to arrange a free ride to the Berkshire Food Project. Use the ride service Tuesday AND Thursday if you would like - there's no limit! For more information you can also call Kim at 413-664-7378. For a ride call 413-458-9831.

Rides provided by a grant from the Fund for Williamstown of the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation.



We always can use an extra set of hands - and our volunteers have a lot of fun while they help us get lunch on the table. Join Us!

Click here for volunteer application

Now serving... lunch... and the arts!



We are pretty excited about the work we've been doing with MCLA Art Professor Melanie Mowinski and her students. In our last newsletter we previewed a design one student has created... but there's so much more coming! Soon, students will be seeking partners in our dining room for a painting project that will take place during October. The paintings our diners create will be on display during a theatrical performance at the college on November 1 & 2. Pang! is a performance of three short radio dramas that addresses issues related to food insecurity. We are always happy to make the arts more accessible to individuals experiencing food insecurity - and the collaborative efforts with Professor Mowinski's class and the Pang! production are really taking it to a whole new level of opportunity. Tickets to the performance on November 1 will be free! Watch our Facebook page for more details.

We are also working with Professor Mowinski's MCLA students to design a recipe book for those preparing large meals like us. The recipe book will feature recipes for 100 servings and we hope to distribute it this winter.



Thanks to a grant from the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation's Berkshire Fresh and Healthy Food Fund

we have been able to upgrade our storage capacity for all the fresh produce we receive in the summer. This has made a huge difference in our kitchen as we can now sort and store vegetables in an organized manner, which allows better planning and use of the harvest.

Additionally, we are part of a collaborative with Louison House and the Al Nelson Friendship Center Pantry that was awarded a grant from the same fund to purchase commercial refrigerators to further extend our produce storing capacity! We are very fortunate to receive so much fresh produce in the summer, but without proper storage, it's been difficult to manage - in the past we even had to turn some donations away. Not any more, though, as now we have the storage space to organize and use produce far better.