

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



MEETING MORE THAN HUNGER: A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

When a grandfather walked into the Crossroads Student Outreach Clinic with his grandson, time was running out. The young boy, who was visiting from outside of the country, was diabetic and had run out of insulin. What was supposed to be a short visit had stretched into an unexpected extra week. The family, with a low household income and no health insurance, faced a frightening situation. Fortunately, the clinic was scheduled that very week, the child received life-saving insulin, and the family left with something more—a box filled with shelf-stable goods, milk, meat, and fresh produce from Food Finders Food Bank.

In collaboration with the United Way of Greater Lafayette, IU School of Medicine, and the IU Health Arnett-Family Medicine Residency, Food Finders Food Bank is now providing resource coordination at the Crossroads Student Outreach Clinic.

The innovative collaboration embeds essential social services directly into the student-led clinic, ensuring that underserved neighbors receive both medical care and resource coordination support in a single visit. This intersection of agencies is breaking down barriers that too often keep people from getting the help they need, resulting in a more integrated and effective model of community support.

Alongside the countless stories from our neighbors, the numbers show us why this work is so critical. In Tippecanoe County, 15.5% of residents are uninsured, 14.5% face food insecurity, and nearly 50% are ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) meaning they earn above the poverty line but still struggle to afford basic necessities. The clinic serves as a crucial safety net for these families, providing preventative and ongoing care for conditions like diabetes, high

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blood pressure, or other health issues that might otherwise send people to the emergency room or go ignored entirely.

Food Finders' role at these clinics extends far beyond providing food boxes. As Resource Coordinator Danielle Vasquez explained, "I work to connect patients with SNAP benefits, Medicaid enrollment, and other vital community services. After families complete their appointments with first and second-year medical students, I share information about Food Finders' programs, and offer assistance across a range of needs—because we know that food insecurity rarely exists in isolation."

The connections Food Finders is making demonstrate the power of this holistic approach. This model allows medical staff to focus on healthcare while

Food Finders' resource coordinators address the social determinants of health that so often complicate medical treatment. Additionally, every eligible clinic patient also receives a food box.

Food Finders is also expanding outreach through the Fresh Market food pantry, increasing community awareness of the clinic and helping fill appointment slots that might otherwise go unused. This partnership represents Food Finders' commitment to addressing not just hunger, but the underlying issues that often accompany and exacerbate food insecurity. By meeting neighbors at a moment when they're already seeking help, Food Finders and our community partners are reducing the physical and mental burdens of financial stress. For a grandfather watching his grandson run out of insulin, this integrated approach meant everything, and for dozens of families to come, it will mean the same.

THE IMPORTANCE OF YEAR-END GIVING IN A CHANGING TAX LANDSCAPE

As the year draws to a close, many supporters begin thinking about how to make the greatest impact with their philanthropy. For Food Finders Food Bank, year-end gifts play a crucial role in keeping shelves stocked, supporting essential programs, and ensuring that every neighbor facing hunger has access to food.

This year, the landscape of charitable giving is shifting. Several new federal tax provisions under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) will take effect in 2026, and understanding them may help donors plan ahead:

- **New deduction for non-itemizers:** Even if you take the standard deduction, you'll be able to claim up to \$1,000 in charitable deductions—or \$2,000 for couples—for cash gifts to qualifying nonprofits.
- **0.5% AGI floor for itemizers:** Itemizing donors must now contribute more than 0.5% of adjusted gross income before charitable deductions begin to apply. Some donors may consider "bunching" gifts into a single year to maximize potential tax benefits.
- **Cap for high-income donors:** Charitable deductions will be limited to an effective 35% tax benefit, even for those in higher brackets.
- **Corporate giving floor:** Businesses may deduct contributions only when giving exceeds 1% of taxable income, up to the familiar 10% cap.

While these changes may influence how you structure future gifts, one thing remains constant: your generosity creates real, immediate impact for families throughout our 16-county service area. If you'd like to talk through how these updates might relate to your giving, or how to plan your 2025 or 2026 contributions for the greatest impact, please reach out to Director of Development, Kyle Puetz at kpuetz@food-finders.org.

Thank you for your partnership and commitment to our community.

DRIVE AWAY HUNGER

Food Finders' 15th annual Drive Away Hunger fall food drive was made possible thanks to the generous support of local, community-minded businesses and partners. Each year, this campaign raises critical awareness and resources to fight food insecurity across our 16-county service area, ensuring that families facing hardship can access the nutritious food they need.

For 2025, we set another ambitious goal—collecting 800,000 meals to support our community. We are deeply grateful to every individual, business, and organization that has contributed so far and helped move us closer to that goal.

Stay tuned to our social media for the latest updates on this year's food drive and for ways you can continue in the fight to end hunger in our region.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT/CEO

Dear Friends,

As the holiday season approaches and families across our communities gather to celebrate, I want to take a moment to express my gratitude to those who continue to support Food Finders Food Bank's mission. This time of year traditionally brings families together around full tables, yet for too many of our neighbors, the holidays force difficult choices between food and other necessities.

These painful realities are compounded this year as neighbors across our 16-county service area face obstacles accessing food assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). In November, essential food assistance was cut off and sporadically resumed; however, the impact is continuing to be felt throughout our community. For Food Finders, this is not about politics. It is about people.

Recently, I saw someone post to a local online page mentioning that they needed help, so I messaged her and offered to pick up a few things while I was out. Her request was simple: some hygiene products, pull-ups, and food for her toddler. As I shopped for that family, I made sure to put in extras because I can right now. I may not always be able to, but I can at this moment, and I know that it will help her get further along this month.

While I was shopping, memories came flooding back—of church friends taking me grocery shopping as a kid, letting me pick out foods that my mom and I liked to take home to her. I probably have a dozen or so memories of friends and strangers quietly helping us when we needed it most. I didn't understand it then, but they were standing in the gap for us. Now it's our turn to do the same.

As we enter this season of giving and gratitude, I ask you to consider how you might deepen your partnership with us. Whether through donations,



volunteering, or simply spreading awareness about the challenges our community faces, every action matters. Your support ensures that families can gather around holiday tables with the food they need, that children experience the joy of the season without the shadow of hunger.

Donate to Food Finders Food Bank or a neighborhood pantry, host a food drive, check on your neighbors (especially the elderly), buy someone's gas, offer rides, offer to babysit, carpool, make extra meals to share. I ask that you do not get caught in worrying about who's "deserving" enough to receive assistance, as we are all worthy. There are countless free ways to show up and lighten someone's load.

These are truly times we have not encountered before and the need is vast. No nonprofit can match the impact that federal nutrition programs provide, which makes it critical for us to stand in the gap for one another. Continue to watch our advocacy channels for calls to action and contacting your representatives to emphasize the ongoing need to support food assistance throughout our 16-county service area.

With your partnership, we will meet this moment and ensure that every neighbor has access to nutritious food during the holidays and throughout the year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kier Crites Muller".

Kier Crites Muller
President/CEO



Food Finders
Food Bank, Inc.
fighting hunger. giving hope

1204 Greenbush Street
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Winter 2025

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Together, we can make sure every family has what they need to celebrate.

Join us in the movement to end hunger at www.food-finders.org

or scan the QR code with your phone



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