

Shared
Harvest
Foodbank
distributed
emergency
food boxes
to more than
1,500 families
on Saturday
at Fairfield
High School.
Pictured
is the April
distribution.

E.L. HUBBARD /
SHARED HARVEST
FOODBANK

## Shared Harvest aiding even more

Record area food distribution continues to grow amid pandemic.

## By Michael D. Pitman

Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD – Shared Harvest is seeing more people turning to their food distributions across their five-county service area as the region continues to adjust to the impact of the novel coronavirus pandemic.

On Saturday, the food bank

assisted 1,530 families with emergency food boxes at its Fairfield High School distribution. It was the first time 30 percent of these families received any type of food assistance, said Terry Perdue, Shared Harvest executive director. In April's distribution at Fairfield High School, just more than 1,300 families sought assistance at the drive-thru pantry.

Even smaller counties in Shared Harvest's service area have seen record numbers of families at

Food banks continued on A6

## https://www.newspapers.com/image/662097786

## Food banks

continued from A1

monthly distribution events, such as more than 700 at the Darke County distribution in April.

"We are getting food into counties that we've traditionally only served through partners," he said.

Food banks across the state and nation have struggled as record rates of food have been distributed to people laid off and furloughed during the pandemic. Shared Harvest officials last month said they were giving food away faster than their supply could be replenished, distributing a couple of months' worth of food within a couple of weeks.

Shared Harvest is part of Feeding America, a nationwide network of food banks. and one of a dozen in the Ohio Association of Food banks.

Feeding America announced on April 1 that an estimated \$1.4 billion in additional resources would be needed over six months to provide enough food for people in need, representing a 30 percent increase to operating costs of its 200-member food bank network.

The Ohio Association of Food banks made a plea last month for \$25 million in emergency funding from the DeWine Administration as food banks across Ohio were seeing a 100 to 500 percent increase in demand for assistance, according to the Associated Press. In mid-April, Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine released \$5 million for the dozen Ohio food banks from the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families block grant.

Shared Harvest has received help from the Ohio

National Guard at DeWine's direction, where they initially were assigned 10 guardsmen and now has the assistance of 26 soldiers. They'll be with Shared Harvest at least through the end of May.

"Of course, we're hoping for an extension, but what we've learned from having them different efficiencies to our processes," Perdue said. "If they leave us, then we'll be heavily recruiting volunteers to help maintain and sustain the level of productions that we've been at for the past six weeks."

Shared Harvest also received a portion of the Jeff Bezos \$100 million donation to Feeding America that purchased five new trucks and a new cooler.

"We try to use these funds wisely where it doesn't just support us immediately but in the long term as we're anticipating this to be long-term," he said.

The new cooler, when finished next week, will be 200 percent larger than its current cooler, and "will greatly impact our ability to distribute fresh foods to people," Perdue said. Fresh food is the food bank's most-requested items, he said, because "it's what people can't find at the grocery store." The old 6.318 cubic-foot cooler will be dismantled when the new 22,080 cubic-foot cooler is operational next week.

The five new trucks will also help the food bank "sustain and continue doing mass distributions," he said.

"We have been limping along with trucks that are falling apart resulting in substantial repair and rental fees.'

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