

In the trenches of the war on local hunger

Hunger is a cruel battleground. Those in the fight usually don't choose to be in this struggle. Battles are waged in silence, embarrassment, solitude, and fear.

Dads who are afraid to be seen as a failure to their families. Moms who are managing a household, nutrition, and work. Seniors faced with impossible choices of food or warmth, food or medicine, and food or rent. Homeless and friendless neighbors panicked to get survival nutrition. Singles trying to make their way in a world with tough economic conditions. Families who simply run out of money before running out of week.

There is no embarrassment in needing help and there is no shame in receiving it. I have been there.

This war isn't likely to ever be completely won. Yet we fight. We fight not only because it's the right thing to do, but we also fight because it's who we are. No one need go hungry.

As a community we are an army of sorts, committed to putting food in as many hungry neighbors' hands as we can. In the trenches, it's a sad unspoken truth that we can't help all the hungry neighbors in need, but we can help the next one, and then the one after that and the one after that.

Such is the battleground and the nature of the fight. We are extremely fortunate to have passionate, skilled volunteers join us. Their selfless service to others is only outshined by their humility. They are serving hundreds of people who will never know who they are.

In the trenches, food prices have increased over 10 percent in the last 12 months. Fixed income from Social Security is increasing this year by roughly 8 percent. Our neighbors who have relied on SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) lost their emergency COVID allotments last year. Forty-seven percent of SNAP households also receive Social Security benefits, and those families will see their SNAP benefits reduced due to the Social Security increase.

The hard truth is that many neighbors' ability to

COLUMNIST



MARK HALL
The Feeding Team Feature

FeedingTeam.org
Facts
49 pantries
10,000 meals in Nov. 2022
Over 30 volunteer families

purchase food has fallen and is worse than one year ago.¹

Current data reports 44,000 food-challenged neighbors in Hamilton County. Welcome to the trenches of the war on hunger. The circumstances that place people in the battle are none of my business.

Helping those in the battle is the business of Feeding Team: Take What you Need, Give What you Can.

With over 44,000 food-challenged neighbors in Hamilton County, **FeedingTeam.org** is a registered 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that provides outdoor 24/7/365 no-questions-asked free food pantries throughout the county.

The pantries exist to meet the food insecurity needs of gap families, neighbors who may not qualify for public assistance and could use a few meals before payday. The pantries serve as many food-challenged neighbors as possible, and our hearts are with those who, like my family, could not always make ends meet.

Thank you for supporting the pantries. We love serving with so many neighbors across Hamilton County. In future columns, we will share more stories about how your generosity served neighbors in times of need. The face of hunger in Hamilton County is not what you may think.

In practical terms, this straightforward way to help neighbors is having real impact on lives, families, and our communities. Thank you. A few meals can change the course of a person's life. A can of green beans means so much more when you have nothing to feed your kids.

Would you like to get involved? Volunteer opportunities are available. We are evaluating new pantry locations. If you think you have a potential location, please contact us.

Mark and Lisa Hall are the Founders of Feeding Team. They may be reached at lisa@feedingteam.org and mark@feedingteam.org or by calling (317) 832-1123.

¹ [usinflationcalculator.com/inflation/food-inflation-in-the-united-states](https://www.usinflationcalculator.com/inflation/food-inflation-in-the-united-states)