



harvest

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Thanksgiving 2025

Hope for the Holidays

“I will always be a supporter of this vital resource.”

— Jessie, Newton



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Catherine's Message

Dear Friends,

Many of us are looking forward to the holiday season, when we gather with loved ones to celebrate traditions and enjoy meals. It is also a season to share what we can with people in need. And this year, more of our neighbors are in need.

In Eastern Massachusetts, 1 in 3 people experiences food insecurity. Hunger exists in all 190 cities and towns across GBFB's service area, from Cape Ann to the Cape and Islands and out to MetroWest. It affects hardworking people, families with children, seniors, veterans, and people living with disabilities.

During winter, many people experiencing food insecurity will face a difficult choice: paying for food or paying for their housing, utilities, or daycare while they work. According to GBFB's Fifth Annual Statewide Food Access Report, 69 percent of food-insecure households in Massachusetts reported confronting this trade-off.

Every gift you make and hour you volunteer helps GBFB distribute healthy meals through our extensive hunger-relief network of distribution partners. As rates of food insecurity increase and unprecedented federal cuts to food assistance take effect, I'm grateful for supporters like you.

When you give to our Hunger Free Holidays campaign in November and December, you make the season a little brighter for our neighbors in need. It helps our neighbors feel more safe and more secure, especially in the uncertain times.

In these pages of Harvest, read about a classroom of fourth graders who sold handmade ornaments and donated the proceeds to GBFB. Learn how the Loaves & Fishes food pantry in Devens prioritizes client choice and dignity, and ensures their neighbors receive turkeys, side dishes, and pies for the holiday season.

Our collective actions make a real difference. These stories show that we have the power to end hunger when we work together.

Gratefully,

Catherine D'Amato
President and CEO

**Hunger Free
Eastern
Massachusetts®**

Donate at:
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WCVB Day of Giving Telethon Raises Over \$200,000



Thank you to everyone who tuned into GBFB's 7th annual WCVB Day of Giving in September. During this annual telethon, we raise awareness and funds to provide nutritious food to neighbors across 190 cities and towns in Eastern Massachusetts.

A special thank you to our official media partner, WCVB, for their continued partnership, and to our volunteers and donors who made the event possible. Several corporate sponsors presented GBFB with donations throughout the day, including:

- Delta Air Lines
- Stop & Shop
- Safelite
- Teddie Peanut Butter

Take a moment to watch the incredible stories from our telethon event. You'll find everything from moving interviews with neighbors receiving food assistance to behind-the-scenes looks at our mission in action.

Visit **GBFB.org/Harvest** to start watching!

A Year-End, Tax-Smart Gift

If you are 70½ or older, did you know that you can use your Individual Retirement Account (IRA) to make gifts to GBFB—and receive tax savings, regardless of whether you itemize?

Your year-end gifts empower our neighbors to put healthy food on their tables, all year long.

Learn more at **GBFB.org/Harvest**.





Jessie Damroth speaking at GBFB's Taste of the Food Bank on May 8, 2025.



Jessie Damroth and her children.

“People May Look at My Family and Never Know We Are Living with Food Insecurity.”

In Jessie Damroth's kitchen in Newton, you might find her using masa flour to make tamales with her two children, or helping her daughter turn overripe bananas into a cake.

“It's important for my children to understand how to cook and what it takes to prepare a meal, and it teaches them to be creative,” she says. “Also, it's part of family bonding.”

Some of the family's most used ingredients—fresh vegetables, yogurt, chicken, beans, masa flour, and bananas—are provided by the Newton Food Pantry.

Jessie and her children experience food insecurity. “I am so thankful that the pantry has been available for us in our greatest time of need,” she told a rapt audience of GBFB supporters.

Until recent years, Jessie was living and working as a nonprofit director on Martha's Vineyard. When her children began experiencing concerning, chronic medical symptoms, everything changed.

The family moved to Newton to be closer to Boston hospitals, and all three members of the household were diagnosed with an ultrarare genetic condition.

“I have drained every savings account I have had to survive,” Jessie explained. “It has been a full-time, unpaid job to coordinate medical appointments, transport my kids to different doctors, and get my kids to the places they are in today.”

“We don't plan to be a client of the Newton Food Pantry forever, but I will always be a supporter of this vital resource.”

— Jessie, Newton

Jessie asked other parents to stop and imagine the experience of food insecurity.

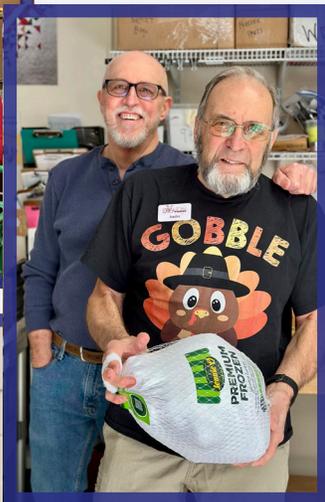
“Imagine the feeling of sheer panic when you're asked to bring in prepackaged snacks for a classroom event, and your SNAP dollars have run out for the month. Imagine feeling relief—and then guilt over the relief—when your daughter is invited to a friend's house for dinner and there's one less meal to provide.”

She acknowledged that in Newton, as in many cities and towns, people may assume that hunger is not an issue in their community.

“I wish more people knew that their neighbors living with food insecurity are not lazy. Most people don't want to rely on benefits,” Jessie said. “We don't plan to be a client of the Newton Food Pantry forever, but I will always be a supporter of this vital resource.”

Donate at: [GBFB.org/Harvest](https://www.gbfb.org/harvest)

Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry



Thanksgiving photos courtesy of Loaves & Fishes staff

-  **Location:** Devens, MA
-  **Families served:** Last year, the pantry served 1,046 families
-  **Amount of food from GBFB:** On average, GBFB supplies 61 percent of the pantry's food.
-  **Client choice and dignity:** Loaves & Fishes offers online ordering to help their clients select foods that will work best for their own needs. "It gives them more choice," says Executive Director Patricia Stern. "What we're finding is there is less waste, and clients get what they need—what their families will eat, and what their families can have with dietary restrictions."
-  **Sharing resources:** Loaves & Fishes purchased a truck with the help of funds from GBFB. Staff use the truck to drive into Boston and pick up food from GBFB's warehouse, as well as pick up food for neighboring pantries that don't have trucks of their own.
-  **Holiday helpings:** Last year, the pantry provided Thanksgiving dinners to 359 families in need. The food options included turkeys, fresh apple cider, holiday side dishes, and desserts.

Donor Profile

Fourth-Grade Fundraiser Raises \$3,500 for Holiday Meals

Last holiday season, the 22 students in Sean Fitzgerald's fourth-grade classroom donated nearly \$3,500 to GBFB.

"It doesn't matter how much or how little you have," Sean tells his students at the Murphy K-8 School in Boston. "You all can contribute to a cause you care about."

The students researched 10 nonprofit organizations in Boston and voted on their favorite, with GBFB emerging as the classroom's top choice. The students created ornaments and sold them for \$5 outside the school's main office. Over four days, they raised almost \$1,700, which was doubled thanks to Stop & Shop's Hunger Free Holidays match.

The project provided an opportunity to practice research, math, technology, art, and cooperation skills, Sean explains. Last December, the students proudly presented a hand-drawn "check" to a GBFB representative who visited their classroom. It was an empowering experience. "I tell the kids, it's not 'wait until you become successful until you can give back,'" Sean says. "We have a classroom mindset of 'service brings success.'"

"If kids can do this, imagine everyone else who has a lot more resources," he adds. "My students don't have jobs. They have love, markers, and wood, and they made ornaments."

Before long, the fourth graders were asking Sean: "What's our next project?"



"It doesn't matter how much or how little you have. You all can contribute to a cause you care about."

— Sean Fitzgerald, Fourth-Grade Teacher

Fueling Eastern Massachusetts: A Week in the Life of a GBFB Truck Driver

GBFB fuels a hunger-relief network that spans 190 cities and towns across Eastern Massachusetts—and that requires sophisticated logistics and operations. GBFB truck drivers arrive as early as 4 a.m. to load up our eight delivery trucks before they hit the road each day to deliver healthy food to communities across the region.

Here's an inside look at a real route completed by a GBFB truck driver over the course of one recent week.

Number of stops completed by
this truck during the week:

15

Total mileage of this truck
over the week:

575 miles

Total mileage of the full fleet of eight trucks over the week:

4,169.2 miles



Volunteer Spotlight

A Teacher Learns About Food Insecurity—and Shares the Mission with the Next Generation



“Telling them this is where the food goes, it’s powerful, and it’s important for kids to learn at a young age that you’ve got to give back.”

— Janet McLaughlin, GBFB volunteer

For Janet McLaughlin, there is always an opportunity to learn—and to teach. The retired teacher, who lives in Medford, is now volunteering at GBFB. She volunteers most Fridays, carefully arranging lemons, bread, and oatmeal into boxes to be distributed to friends and neighbors in need across Eastern Massachusetts.

“I’ve gone by GBFB for years and years, but I never knew about how massive an operation it is, or where the food goes,” Janet says, adding that she marvels at the efficiency.

After volunteer shifts, Janet teaches her grandchildren about GBFB and its mission. She often takes photos of the food she’s sorted and packed to show them later.

When Janet’s five-year-old grandchild asked, “Why doesn’t everyone just go to the grocery store?” Janet explained that it’s more complicated—that some people may not have the money or resources for food, so GBFB steps in to help.

With each photo and story Janet shares, her grandchildren are learning about the importance of food banks in our community, and the value of giving back. “It’s very fulfilling for me,” Janet says, “and my own volunteering is also helping my grandchildren.”

Turn hunger into hope this season.



Presented by  **STOP&SHOP.**

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 **[GBFB.org/Holidays](https://www.gbfb.org/Holidays)**

Every \$50 doubles to provide holiday meals for four families thanks to Stop & Shop.

