



hunger doesn't
take a vacation



PACK A PROTEIN PICNIC: Talking Points

In honor of its 100th year, United Way of Central Iowa is hosting the first-ever Pack A Protein Picnic food drive from July 7 – 21 to collect food for hungry kids and families in our community.

More than 65,000 central Iowans in Polk, Dallas and Warren counties are food insecure; they don't know where their next meal is coming from. Can you imagine not knowing when you were going to eat next, or how you were going to get your hands on that food?

Kids are especially hard-hit. One in five children in central Iowa face food-insecurity. And more than 75 percent of students in the Des Moines Public Schools receive free or reduced-price lunch. When school is out for summer, those kids lose a source of regular meals they could count on.

Summer is an especially difficult time for low-income families," says Erin Drinnin, United Way of Central Iowa's community impact officer, health. "Kids are out of school and don't receive the free or reduced-price lunch they may have been getting in the cafeteria. That means families have to rely more on their local food pantry, whose shelves are likely running out of the food collected around the holidays. It's easy to forget to donate during the summer, but that's when pantries and other community agencies need food the most."

The food collected during this drive will go to the Des Moines Area Religious Council (or DMARC), which supports 11 food pantries in Polk county. It will also go to pantries in Dallas and Warren counties.

This year, DMARC is celebrating the 40th anniversary of its Food Pantry network. Doug Ventling, DMARC board president, says: "In spite of all the recognition for our 'hipness' and wealth, tens of thousands of our neighbors across Greater Des Moines are in a crisis of epic proportions. Food insecurity and hunger are at an all-time high. In FY 2016 DMARC has already distributed nearly 1.4 million food items to those in need."

1.4 million food items! All that food needs to be replaced on pantry shelves. And you can help. Between July 7 and 21, please bring in quality, nonperishable food items and drop them off [STATE WHERE YOUR ORGANIZATION IS COLLECTING FOOD].

Because less than 20 percent of donated items are protein, this food drive is focusing on protein, which is an essential nutrient for growth and development in kids, teens and pregnant women.

Although the drive will accept any nonperishable items, please consider bringing in some of the following:

- Peanut butter
- Canned tuna or salmon
- Canned chicken
- Canned beans
- Dried beans
- Sardines
- Other canned meats like SPAM

[STATE ANY INCENTIVES OR COMPETITIONS YOU ARE OFFERING PEOPLE FOR DONATIONS]

United Way of Central Iowa and DMARC thank you for your support of this important cause: feeding hungry kids and families in our community. With your help, we can collect the protein to help kids power through summer.