As I write this we are coming off a year where we supplied over 45 million pounds of food through our network, or close to 40 million meals. This is up nearly 15% over the last two years. Another way to consider our impact; in the last 5 years we’ve delivered over 175 million pounds of food to the Tampa Bay community. I mention this as it speaks to our goals, but also our role; how do we capture as much food as possible, and ensure it lands on a table?

While we are proud of these efforts, we are aware that there is much room to grow. In the coming year we will turn our focus towards quality, rather than solely on quantity. What does this mean to our network of partners? Hopefully, a few things. First, we are focusing on trying to obtain better food. While we all love a carbonated drink or a loaf of bread, a diet they do not make. We need to focus our energy and resources on better foods, I want to be clear; this does not mean more cans and boxes. The days of having these valuable resources have passed us all by. Stores, manufacturers and other donors do not have these products to donate any longer. Still, produce and store product are plentiful and we will seek to ensure our work focuses on these assets.

It also means that we want to continue to strive to be a better partner. We are aware that while we do much, we have room to improve. And, it’s on this point we’ll focus. We recently brought in a new Director of Operations (Jerry Coleman, formerly of RCS in Clearwater) whose specialty is the building of sound and effective processes. We look forward to his work paying dividends over the course of 2015.

As always, I want to be sure to say thanks to all of you who make food relief work in our community. We are proud to work alongside you in making sure that no one goes hungry.

A message from the Executive Director

I’ve been at Feeding America Tampa Bay for two years now and much has changed. I know you all are aware of many differences, some you may love, others, you may find some challenge with. Still, our progress has been forward, and, in many ways, remarkable.

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Thomas Mantz

save the date AGENCY CONFERENCE

We are excited to announce that we will be having our annual Agency Conference on Friday, May 1, 2015! The conference will feature fun and practical workshops on grant writing, advocacy and more. We will also have fantastic door prizes and a delicious lunch! Mark your calendars now! Don’t miss out on the opportunity to network with your fellow agencies while learning how you can improve your food programs.

Stay tuned for more information – invitations will be sent out soon!

We’d like to hear from you if you have any topics you would like us to create a workshop for!

We at Feeding America Tampa Bay would like to wish you all a Happy Valentine’s Day!

Do you have an inspiring success story? Do you know a family or individual who receives food assistance that would share their story?

Stories from you and the clients we serve are powerful! They help us educate the community on the issue of hunger and allow us to show the impact we and our agencies are making every day. Don’t be afraid to brag – we love it when you do! Hearing about your food programs and achievements reenergizes and encourages us. Contact Nicole at ntegge@feedingamericatampabay.org to share your story or to get us in touch with a family or individual who wants to share theirs!

DID YOU KNOW?

The tomato is the world’s most popular fruit!

First cultivated by the Aztecs and Incas, the tomato has since traveled across the globe into the kitchens of many. Cholesterol free and rich in Vitamins A & C, the tomato is a great addition to many recipes.

FLORIDA GROWS MORE TOMATOES THAN ANY OTHER STATE!
While transporting frozen or refrigerated items from the food bank to your site, use freezer blankets or insulated pallet covers. These covers:

- Keep items cold during transport
- Protect frozen & refrigerated food from becoming temperature-compromised
- Range from $30-$200
- Are one of the best investments to make for your food program

If you don’t have the budget for covers, please make sure to always bring coolers and tarps when picking up cold items.

www.refrigiwear.com 800-645-3744
www.randallmfg.com 800-323-7424
www.itwip.com 800-233-6180
www.qasupplies.com 800-472-7205

**Agency Tip:**

**APPLY TODAY!**

**Does your food program have a youth and educational focused program?**

Apply today for the Rays Baseball Foundation’s Community Fund Grant. Visit the link below and let the Rays know how they can help support and enhance your food program’s impact on youth in the Tampa Bay area. Applications are due by Friday, March 6, 2015.

Apply at tampabay.rays.mlb.com/tb/community/rbf.jsp

**Premier Product Program**

Do you find that your food program could always use more shelf-stable items to prepare for a sudden influx of clients? FATB’s Premier Product Program (PPP) is a great option for our agency partners who would like to increase the number of nonperishable items that they serve. This program offers a variety of essential products at a discounted price. The food bank purchases these products in volume and passes the savings along.

We are proud to announce our new and improved Premier Product Program ordering system. This was created with you in mind! Every month an agency can place an order and now it’s become easier than ever! Just click on the link to simply specify and submit your order. Not internet savvy? Don’t worry! Call Nicole and she’ll walk you through your first order.

**Meet Nicole**

Nicole joined Feeding America Tampa Bay in September of 2014 as the Agency Relations Associate. She is new to agency relations and is currently focused on meeting and site monitoring all of our agency partners. She is committed to supporting and advocating for you as we work together to feed the hungry in our community. Nicole is here to help build our relationship with your agency, so if you have any questions or concerns about online ordering, the Premier Product Program, mobile pantries or just want to say hi, call her at 813.690.8233 or shoot her an email at ntegge@feedingamericatampabay.org.

**Highlights**

1. Congratulations to Kingdom Kids of Tampa Bay for being one of the 75 food pantries across the country awarded one of Walmart’s Holiday Food Pantry Makeover Grants! This grant will allow Kingdom Kids to further their mission and continue to strengthen families, schools, and communities in the Tampa Bay area.

2. January 30th was particularly exciting for the kids at Pinellas Park Boys & Girls Club. Feeding America Tampa Bay, Laser Spine Institute, Tampa Bay Lightning, and the Give & Grub food truck partnered up to give the children a special treat. Lightning goalie Ben Bishop and defenceman Anton Strålman made a surprise appearance, helping serve meals from the food truck, play games with the kids, and even pose in the Give & Grub photo booth. At the end of the day, each child received a backpack of food, enough to provide five meals for the weekend when the children are most at-risk of going hungry.

This backpack distribution was just one of many that occur each week due to the partnership between these organizations. For every meal purchased from the Give & Grub food truck, a meal will be donated to a child in need. In only a few months, this program has provided over 14,000 meals! Next time you see the Give & Grub truck, be sure to get yourself a meal. Not only will you be helping feed a hungry child, but you’ll love the food!

Special thanks to LSI and Give & Grub for your commitment to fighting hunger!