



Carson Pazdan is the founder of Kids Feeding Kids and a local hero in the fight against hunger.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM PRISCHING

Hunger's Perfect Storm

EVERY MORNING, 11 million children across the United States wake up not knowing when, or where, their next meal will be found. With the country going into lockdown, millions of workers in the United States lost their jobs. Food pantries are struggling to keep up with the increase in demand—up 600% in some places. With an increase in food insecure families, massive job loss, and a lack of resources available to supplement the increase in demand, the hunger pandemic's growth is driven by a perfect storm.

When I was little, I had a habit of making a mess in our kitchen with various cooking experiments. After one very messy dish, my Mom and I got into a discussion about hunger. She explained that some people don't have enough to eat, and how various factors could lead to that situation. This was where my fight against hunger began.

Hunger is not just a threat in theory. The

statistics used about the problem distract from the very personal and painful physical implications. The longer the human body goes without food, the more susceptible it becomes to infections. As time goes on, the body begins to digest its own protein-rich organs to survive, reducing the person to nothing but skin and bones. Picture a child who hasn't eaten in weeks resembling an elderly body. This haunting image may describe hunger somewhere else in the world, but not necessarily in America. In the U.S., those who are food insecure often resort to more affordable high-fat, high-sugar foods. Studies have linked asthma, cancer, and gum disease to malnourishment. Hunger is a disease sweeping across the country.

So how do we flatten *this* particular curve?

In any normal year (and this year is anything but), spring food drives help restock food pantries. In the winter, food pantries receive the most

donations, after all, people are in the holiday giving spirit. However, those donations start to dry up as the spring approaches. Due to COVID-19, most spring food drives were canceled. But individuals can help our pantries. When making donations, either personally or through an organization, smaller food pantries are as important as state level pantries. State pantries, such as the Northern Illinois Food Bank, receive a large portion of the support from corporations while numerous local food pantries such as the Cuba Township Food Pantry don't receive as much. In fighting hunger, no act is too small.

For the past 12 years I have been spreading hunger awareness across the Barrington area, largely at the elementary school level. As important as the literal fight against hunger is, I believe it is even more important to expose my peers and younger students to the principle of fighting for a cause.

Coordinating food drives and educating kids on the hunger epidemic was something I chose to help make a difference. The thing is, there are a plethora of issues facing our country. Homelessness, racial inequality, and pollution are just some of the issues we can't ignore, hoping they'll go away. I see my peers posting on social media about whatever issue is culturally relevant at that moment. This is a great way to spread information, but it isn't enough. There's so much in the world that can change for the better, and the youth of this generation are the vessels of that change. If we don't act now, then when?

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Carson Pazdan will be a junior at Barrington High School. At age 5, he founded the Kids Feeding Kids Club. For 12 years, Kids Feeding Kids has been dedicated to fighting hunger and spreading awareness, compassion, and the ethic of philanthropy, and thousands of children have participated in raising funds and food donations for food banks and local pantries. Carson also enjoys playing volleyball and guitar.

Food Pantry Wish List

Household products including toilet paper, paper towels, laundry detergent, and cleaning supplies. Monetary donations and \$25 Jewel gift cards.



Cuba Township Assessor Rebecca Tonigan is also a board member for Cuba Cares Fund.

Cuba Cares Fund Helps Those Facing Hunger

BY REBECCA M. TONIGAN

THE CUBA CARES FUND is a 501(c)3 public charity established in 2003 for the purpose of assisting Cuba Township residents in need of financial assistance and who may not qualify for other state, county, or township assistance. The Cuba Cares Fund (CCF) does not provide any funding to cover the cost of the staff. The Food Pantry is manned by 10 volunteers supervised by Food Pantry Coordinator Bridget Lacson. CCF Board includes members Priscilla Rose, Sheryl Tanaka, and Rebecca Tonigan.

The Cuba Township Food Pantry is our primary partner and the CCF agrees to provide gift cards to local grocery stores and gas stations, as well as non-perishable items to ensure the food pantry provides those in need of food assistance, household items, and fuel for travel.

The Cuba Cares Fund partners with local non-profits including Saint Anne's Project Hope, CAP Lake County, and Salvation Army for housing assistance, home heating bill payment assistance, and other emergency assistance.

Supplying food is 90% of the assistance provided by Cuba Cares and roughly 85% of our clients are seniors or disabled. Prior to the pandemic, food pantry clients gathered each Tuesday

morning to mingle and then shop for fresh fruits and vegetables, dry storage items, and household products.

Since the Governor's Executive Order, the food pantry transitioned to a drive-through, offering

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 CARSON PAZDAN'S KIDS FEEDING
 KIDS INITIATIVE ACQUIRED NATIONAL
 FUNDS TO FIGHT HUNGER AND
 AWARDED THEM TO THE CUBA CARES
 FUND FOOD PANTRY. THEY DONATED
 A TOTAL OF \$15,000. IT WAS AN
 UNBELIEVABLE, UNEXPECTED GIFT
 TO THE FOOD PANTRY, AND EVIDENCE
 THAT ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A BIG
 DIFFERENCE. CARSON IS A CUBA
 CARES HERO!

household essentials, fresh fruits and vegetables, bakery items, and canned/dry storage items.

Client choice remains a priority to ensure clients eat the donated food and waste is limited. In the past three months, our recipients increased by more than 30%.

New clients are processed through a phone intake. New clients include more families with children and college students. Over 85% of new clients are service industry workers or furloughed/laid off workers, many who have not received unemployment checks to date.

The Cuba Township community has been tremendously generous. Below are some of our faith-based, public, civic, and corporate donors: Saint Mark's Episcopal Church, Saint Paul's United Church of Christ, Saint Anne's Project Hope, Barrington Area United Way and Barrington Area Community Foundation's COVID Response Fund, Barrington Rotary Charities, Lake Barrington Shores Food Drive and Gift Card Donation, Barrington 220, and Epcoc, Inc.

Fresh food donations have been provided by Northern Illinois Food Bank, Jewel, Trader Joe's, Costco, Smart Farm, and Garfield Produce Company.

To learn more, or to fill out a food pantry Intake Form online, visit cubatwpil.gov, email info@cubatwpil.gov, or call 847-381-1924. 

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 Rebecca M. Tonigan is the Deputy Assessor of Cuba Township.