



**When there is no food in the house, when an eviction is looming,  
when the lights have been shut off and there is no heat,  
your neighbors turn for help to the Center for Food Action.**

### **Summary:**

The Center for Food Action (CFA), founded in 1976, is a non-profit, 501 (c) (3) organization that provides emergency services to northern New Jersey's poorest and most vulnerable residents. CFA provides food, housing, utility and heating assistance and offers counseling and advocacy services to low-income individuals and families.

CFA is headquartered in Englewood and has sites in Fairview, Hackensack, Mahwah, Ridgefield, Ringwood, and Saddle Brook. In June, at the request of Bergen Community College, CFA opened a site on BCC's Paramus campus in order to serve low-income students and their families.

People from more than 100 towns in northern New Jersey receive a wide range of emergency and case management services so that they are able to put food on their tables, keep a roof over their heads, keep their lights and gas on, heat their homes and get the information, referrals, counseling and advocacy services they need to improve their lives.

### **Statement of Need**

The Center for Food Action is an important community resource for those living in poverty. Hunger has many faces; it shows itself in a parent skipping meals so her children can eat, a child going to bed with an empty stomach, an elderly person choosing to pay rent rather than buy groceries, the mom who at the end of the month encourages her teenage son to go to dinner at his friend's home so he has a meal, the elderly man going through a dumpster outside a local restaurant and the grandmother raising her grandchildren who regularly adds water to milk to make it stretch a few more days. Each of these individuals lives in our community and has turned to CFA for help.

CFA provides the working poor, the recently unemployed, the chronically ill, and the elderly, children living in poverty, battered women and people with disabilities with immediate help. Through our case management program, our advocates' provide information, referrals, counseling and assistance in accessing public programs and other community services. They work with people who are struggling and help them meet their immediate needs – food, shelter, heat, and lights while at the same time helping clients make plans to attain a better future.

## **Program Highlights**

CFA will distribute more than \$4,000,000 worth of food this year; approximately 72,000 emergency and holiday food packages. Six years ago, the Center for Food Action was giving out 2,500 food packages a month. Now, on average, we are giving out more than 4,700 seven-day food packages monthly. We also provide holiday food packages to more than 3,300 households.

We have already expended more than \$1,100,000, this year, in financial assistance to clients in order to prevent evictions and the disconnection of their electric and gas services and to assist families and seniors with heating oil.

## **Overview of CFA Programs**

*Emergency Food, Housing and Utility Program, Weekend Snack Pack Program, Gifts Program and Case Management and More:*

Poor families, the elderly and those with disabilities often find themselves in crisis situations because of the strain of providing food and shelter for their families, paying their utility bills and meeting their other basic expenses. Sometimes a disaster such as an illness, injury, a fire, or the sudden loss of a job means someone will need CFA's help to meet the basics of life – food, shelter, heat and lights. Even a car repair bill, the need to replace a heater, a costly prescription can throw a carefully balanced budget askew.

*Emergency Food:* CFA provides 7-day nutritious food packages to low-income people from eight sites in northern New Jersey. Annually, CFA collects and distributes more than \$4,000,000 worth of food. Food donations come from all sectors of the community, including: individuals, religious, schools, scouts, civic associations, corporations and local businesses and the government commodity program. We also purchase food in order to supplement the donations. Purchased foods include fresh produce, eggs, meats, low-sugar, low-salt, gluten-free, kosher and ethnic items. As food donations have declined, CFA is finding it necessary to also purchase basics, such as cereal and hearty soups. To increase the amount of food we can give out, we are now picking up at area supermarkets, which bring in about 3,000 pounds of usable food a week and we will be expanding this effort since we just purchased a refrigerator truck with funds earmarked by several donors.

*Weekend Snack Pack Program:* Many low-income parents rely on school meals to feed their children. Often, children go hungry on the weekends when these meals are not available. CFA initiated a pilot project to provide food to children who receive free or reduced price meals on school days. Children attending four area schools are given easy-to-prepare, single serving food items for the weekend. This program has been warmly received by both the schools and the parents. Teachers report that children come to school on Mondays with more energy and parents say the food really helps them stretch their food budgets and that the children are less likely to be hungry. The packages include cereal, milk, juice, fruit bar, and several lunch items.

*Diabetic Food/Low Salt/Gluten Free/Kosher/Korean Food Packages:* CFA makes every effort to accommodate clients with special needs. We distribute more than 300 diabetic food packages and 100 Korean food packages monthly. We are getting more requests for gluten free foods.

*Thanksgiving Packages:* Traditionally, CFA has given Thanksgiving food packages to more than 3,300 low-income households, about 12,000 people. Many of CFA's regular volunteers and several hundred additional volunteers assist with this effort.

Homelessness Prevention and Heating, and Utility Assistance Program: CFA will spend at least \$1.3 million this year to prevent evictions and the disconnection of utilities, to pay security deposits on behalf of the household, and, to purchase heating oil/propane for people in need. Both government and private funding makes this work possible. Client-households meet with a social worker or advocate so that a determination can be made regarding eligibility. The staff member works with the household to resolve the immediate problems. Often, this means working with the client, the landlord and the utility or heating oil company. If funding is available, the landlord or company is paid directly by CFA.

Counseling and Advocacy: CFA provides information, referrals, counseling, and advocacy to clients and helps them access government and community services to which they are entitled. Advocates work with families to help them assess their options and makes recommendations to clients so that they can address the issues that led to the immediate crises and suggests ways they can implement long-term solutions that will help provide individuals and families with a better quality of life. If appropriate, clients are referred to CFA's other programs, which include assistance with rent, security deposits, utility bills, purchase of heating oil, etc. Workshops are periodically offered on topics such as: nutrition, budgeting, buying healthy foods on a limited budget, etc. Staff and volunteers follow-up with clients and provide additional support as needed.

CFA Gardens: As part of our work to maximize the nutritional content of our emergency food packages, CFA recently launch our first "on-site" garden at CFA Englewood.

Gift Program: CFA provides back-to-school supplies, toys, winter coats, hats, mittens, books, and department store gift cards to hundreds of families each year.

Smile Program: This is a new initiative with the goal of encouraging our young clients to exercise proper dental hygiene. Each Smile Packs contains a toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, etc. These packs will be added twice a year to our Weekend Snack Packs and, as available, given to clients with young children as part of their seven-day food package.

### **Partial List of Supporters**

CFA receives support from individuals, the religious community, schools, civic associations, foundations, local businesses, corporations, and government funding.

A partial list of funder: Anelco, Appaloosa Management, Atlantic Stewardship Bank, BMW, Boiling Springs Savings Bank, Bloomingdale's, Boye Foundation, Coalition of 100 Black Women, Carlson Family Foundation, Columbia Bank, Community Chest of Englewood, Community Chest of Leonia, Church World Service CROP-Walks, Curtiss-Wright, Diaco Family Foundation, The Doll League, Eastern Bergen County Board of Realtors, ECI, Food Research and Action Center, Kaplen Foundation, KPMG, George Link Jr. Foundation, JTI Foundation, Macy's, MAZON, Montammy Fund, MWW Group, National Council of Jewish Women, North Jersey Community Bank, North Jersey Media Group Foundation, North Jersey Public Adjusters, Northern New Jersey Community Foundation, Oritani Bank, OritaniBank Charitable Foundation, Ringwood Hunger Walk, Rotary Clubs, Roviario Fund, Russell Berrie Foundation, Sharp Electronics, ShopRite, SONY, Stop & Shop, TD Bank, Time Warner Cable, Taub Foundation, UNICO, Unilever, UPS, Valley Hospital/Valley Health Systems, Wells Fargo, and Richard S. Wolfman Family Foundation. Government funding comes from, FEMA, The State of New Jersey, County of Bergen and County of Passaic.