

# LION

NOVEMBER 2017 // [lionmagazine.org](http://lionmagazine.org)



Hunger.  
Our Common Enemy.

---

HOW LIONS ARE WORKING IN  
THEIR COMMUNITIES TO END THE  
WORLD'S HUNGER PROBLEM



Lions Clubs International



Hunger is  
Nationless

# A PROBLEM —WITHOUT— BORDERS

Stories by Joan Cary

## FIGHTING HUNGER ACROSS THE GLOBE AND IN OUR BACKYARD.

Thirty-three years ago, in 1984, St. Raphael Church in Chicago's west suburb of Naperville, opened a food pantry in a closet. In the first year they served eight families.

Now, as Loaves & Fishes Community Services, in a 6-year-old facility that they have already outgrown, volunteers serve 800 families a week from just DuPage County, an affluent area.

"As an individual you might think, 'What can I do?' You feel like you are just one. How can you make a difference? But you can do a lot when you volunteer at a place like this," says Naperville Noon Lion Jim Woodring, sorting bread during his weekly shift at Loaves & Fishes. "It takes a lot of manpower to make this happen. And it feels good to help people in need."



Lion Jim Woodring (left) sorts bread at Loaves & Fishes food pantry in Naperville, Illinois. Louise Schuster (right) finds healthy foods at a pop-up pantry in an apartment building for low-income seniors in Wheaton, Illinois. Photos by Alex Garcia.

---

**"IT TAKES A LOT OF MANPOWER TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN.  
AND IT FEELS GOOD TO HELP PEOPLE IN NEED."**

Naperville Noon Lion Jim Woodring

Woodring is usually lifting heavy packages of frozen meat. Most volunteers don't choose his area because it's a workout and it's cold. But he wears gloves and he smiles like he's unpacking presents.

In a way, he is.

All across the U.S., Lions and Leos address the growing problem of hunger at home and abroad. Many focus on the fact that children need nutritious food—not just any food—to grow, to learn and to stay healthy.

Some Lions, like those in Naperville, financially and physically support food banks and pantries for families, including Loaves & Fishes and Feed My Starving Children, a nonprofit providing nutritious meals for malnourished children in the poorest areas of the world.

Many clubs host food drives. Some feed children at schools and community centers. Others send children home from school with food so the family can eat on the weekend. Still others take meals to the elderly and shut-ins.

In a "pop-up pantry" program, Loaves & Fishes brings food to a low-income housing complex so disabled seniors and those without transportation can get healthy foods right in their building.

"It's always nice to get a few good items like fruit and peanut butter," says Louise Schuster,

88, as she fills her cart. She sometimes perilously pushes her walker across a busy four-lane road when she runs short on food.

In the U.S. today, 5 million seniors age 60 and older, and 13 million children face hunger, says Feeding America, a network of 200 food banks.

In Arizona, the numbers are higher than the national average, reports Jerry Brown of St. Mary's Food Bank in Phoenix. "Nationally, one in six children is food insecure. But in Arizona, it's one in five."

St. Mary's is our nation's first food bank. Fifty years ago a retired businessman was volunteering at a soup kitchen in Phoenix and met a woman who was regularly foraging in the garbage outside a grocery store for discarded food to feed her children. He went to his parish basilica, St. Mary's, and they gave him a building, an old pick-up truck and \$3,000.

This September, St. Mary's served their billionth meal, and in fiscal year 2016-2017 they distributed more than 86 million pounds of donated food statewide. That's 13 million pounds more than the last year.

"In 1967, we distributed 250,000 pounds of food," Brown says. "Now every day we distribute 250,000 pounds. What we did in that entire first year now represents a Monday for St. Mary's."

## NEW FOCUS: HUNGER

The problem is all around us

- Over 42 million food insecure people living in the United States
- One in seven people are hungry worldwide
- Lack of proper nutrition is linked to 3.1 million deaths each year for children below the age of five

The states of Mississippi, New Mexico, Arizona, Alabama and Arkansas had the highest rates of food-insecure children in 2014, according to Feeding America. But hunger threatens everywhere: openly in city centers, hidden in middle-class suburban neighborhoods, sight unseen in peaceful rural areas. In fact, Feeding America says 15 percent of rural households are food insecure.

The reasons are many. In Arizona, says Brown, access to healthy food can be limited. Some people live 35 miles from a grocery store and don't have regular transportation.

Nationally, the recession shattered retirement plans. Medication prices are high. People are forced to choose between their medicine and healthy foods.

In suburban areas thought to be affluent, it's not that people don't have jobs. "It's that they have low-paying jobs. A lot of people are surprised, but poverty has risen substantially, even here," says Nancy Wiersum, a vice president at Loaves & Fishes.

The pantry relies on 60 to 100 volunteers a day. Sixty percent of the food comes from grocery stores each week—60,000

to 90,000 pounds of food that's good to eat but nearing the expiration date, explains Cary Gilkey, vice president of food operations. The rest is purchased with donations and gained from food drives.

"Just about every Lions club in Arizona has a food drive," says Sun City Host Lion Paul Yopps in District 21 A where they collected 827 pounds of food and water for St. Mary's this summer.

In District 13 OH7 in southeast Ohio, many live far below the poverty line. Lions and Leo clubs

are working to collect 100,000 food items by February, says District Governor Dave Stockum.

Lions and Leos also fill backpacks with protein-packed food for schoolchildren to take home on Friday, knowing that it may be the only food many have for the weekend.

"We live in a very rural, very poor area. These kids would not have anything to eat if we didn't have this 'Backpack Friday' project," says Sutherlin Lion Sharon Elliott in Oregon. "We try to pack enough for other kids or the whole family, including fruits and vegetables."

At Blythewood High School near Columbia, South Carolina, Leo President Jaelyn Ellis says the club's focus on hunger has opened her eyes to how many students go hungry. "We go to school with them every day, and we don't even know," she says.

At the Illinois pantry, Woodring hopes to erase misconceptions and stigmas. "These are not people who are trying to get something for

nothing," he says. "These people have come on hard times and they would like nothing more than to be in another place in life."

Rarely does anyone leave without an expression of appreciation, but Jenny, a young

mom who made regular visits to Loaves & Fishes, said it in a letter.

"I walked into Loaves & Fishes with my head hung low the first time. I walked out feeling less shame and more love. ... I no longer have to ration a bag of apples between my four kids and my husband, and I no longer feel guilty about eating," she wrote. "I will never be able to describe how it feels as a mom to deny your kids because you have to stretch it all week."

"THESE ARE NOT PEOPLE WHO ARE TRYING TO GET SOMETHING FOR NOTHING. ... THESE PEOPLE HAVE COME ON HARD TIMES AND THEY WOULD LIKE NOTHING MORE THAN TO BE IN ANOTHER PLACE IN LIFE."

Lion Woodring

St. Mary's Food Bank has been feeding the hungry in Arizona for 50 years. Photos by Caitlin O'Hara.





## HUNGER IS A REALITY IN MORE PLACES THAN EVER BEFORE

La Guarjira, along the northeast border of Colombia by the turquoise waters of the Caribbean, is home to the Wayuu, the largest of Colombia's indigenous communities.

"The people of the sun, sand and wind," wear brightly-colored garments. Women weave their internationally-known art, vivid "mochila" bags with unique, intricate geometric designs that are expressions of their culture.

But the joy in the colors is not indicative of their lives.

Nearly 5,000 Wayuu children have died since 2011 of starvation and malnutrition.

Since 2011, a persistent drought has left the people with parched land, dust and wind. Crops have died. The goats that support the people cannot live without food and water. And the people walk hours in the heat to access wells, only to find the water contaminated, and in the worst cases, laden with bacteria.

An economy based on domestic agriculture with little water available is not possible, says documentary photographer Nicolo' Filippo Rosso of Bogota, Colombia, who spent months capturing the Wayuu life in pictures and now returns to them as a friend.

Five La Guarjira Lions clubs are now offering a glimmer of hope.

With an LCIF grant, Lions are constructing six centers to provide food near local schools, encouraging school attendance and ensuring that Wayuu children receive well-balanced meals. Municipal governments nearby have committed to operating them and providing food, staff and furniture, and Lions have promised continued support.



Photos by Nicolo' Filippo Rosso

In 2011, the Colombian government constructed a dam on the Rancheria River, which once fed the aquifer that was the Wayuu's water source. But the majority of the river's water is now diverted to neighboring municipalities and to sustain South America's largest open-pit coalmine. As a result, what the Wayuu can access is merely a trickle.

As plants die, so does the traditional Wayuu healer's resource for treatments, leaving the people to walk hours to a hospital where no one speaks their language, says Rosso. The women walk the same distance to sell their bags, hoping for money to buy food. But they face exploitation and corruption.

"These people are the victims of lies and abandonment. Their culture is dying, and we should care about that," Rosso says. "I think it's important we really understand. Maybe we can't change the condition for all the Wayuu people, but let's at least try to have an impact on some. If there is anything we can do, something as little as a water pump, then maybe we can change the life of one community or even one family."

### LCIF GRANTS OFFER HOPE

With an LCIF grant, Lions are constructing six centers to provide food near local schools, encouraging school attendance and ensuring that Wayuu children receive well-balanced meals.

## TOGETHER WE CAN HELP END HUNGER

Around the world, one in three children's deaths is the result of malnutrition.

Lions strive to change that number, to decrease food insecurity in their communities and provide for those suffering from a lack of healthy foods.

"We want to make sure there is not one day where the children sleep with hunger and not one day where children go to school with an empty stomach," says Past District Governor Ruth Chua, president of the Manila Amity Lions Club in the Philippines.

The Amity Lions give cash prizes to the children in their supplemental feeding program who gain the most weight. It's an incentive for parents to bring their malnourished children to the daily meals.

Club members worried that one feeding wouldn't make a lasting impact on the lives of the children, Chua explains. So with the assistance of an LCIF grant, Lions provide a nutritious meal every day to children who are small and often weak, more susceptible to

illness and infection, and at risk of falling behind in school, says Chua.

This year, the club was joined by the Tacloban City Lions and extended the feeding project to a school in Tacloban City, an area devastated in 2013 by Super Typhoon Yolanda. It is intended to help 26 "wasted" students where muscle and fat is "wasting away." Many of the children's parents were fishermen forced to relocate from the coast after Yolanda, leaving them with no income, Chua says. Her club hopes to also help these parents rebuild their lives.

"We cannot feed their children forever. We want their parents to also do their share," says Chua, "But right now we want to save the children."

These efforts extend worldwide.

In India, Lions are giving 19,000 children across the country free lunch every day. In District 321 A2, \$10,400 in free grain was distributed across the nation to needy people. Roughly \$1 feeds three people.

---

"WE WANT TO MAKE SURE THERE IS NOT ONE DAY WHERE THE CHILDREN SLEEP WITH HUNGER AND NOT ONE DAY WHERE CHILDREN GO TO SCHOOL WITH AN EMPTY STOMACH."

Past District Governor Ruth Chua, president of the Manila Amity Lions Club in the Philippines

---



Children in the Philippines benefit from the feeding program established by the Manila Amity Lions.

In East Africa, the Kenyan Lions of District 411 A team up with Lions in Sweden to provide supplies for famine victims. In Lebanon, Lions ran a charity restaurant that fed thousands. In Australia, District 201 V5's Hunger Portfolio brings Lions and the community together assembling food hampers for families in need.

In the U.S., Illinois Lions support Feed My Starving Children, a nonprofit that produces nutritional complete meals specifically formulated for malnourished children in the poorest areas of the world.

Every community has their own way to contribute.

Vermont's Norton Lions recognized that children need more than "belly fillers." With a \$500 Centennial Grant from LCI they launched the Norton Friends and Farmers Market's Kids Nutritional Program.

"Kid Bucks" provides children ages 4 to 12 with \$5 to spend on fresh fruits and veggies at the farmers market, giving less fortunate children a chance to enjoy these sometimes expensive

foods. Lessons are provided on healthy eating, and since the produce is locally grown, it also helps local farmers.

"Who knows? One of the children Lions help could be the future leader of this country," says Chua. "If we can provide better health, better education, they could free themselves from the poverty they are in now. They could have a better life."

#### Digital LION

Think you know hunger? There is a lot more to the problem than you probably realize. Also, a Leo club in the Philippines curbs hunger through an interesting strategy. Watch these two short videos at [lionmagazine.org](http://lionmagazine.org).

Lions have battled hunger for decades. Read these stories at [lionmagazine.org](http://lionmagazine.org).

- A Lion family gives the 50th million CARE package (May 1963 LION).
- Famine plagues the world, and malnutrition afflicts the United States (December 1974 LION).
- U.S. Lions put food on the table coast to coast (March 2008 LION).

## 5 WAYS TO HELP

Ready to take action in your community? These are five easy ways to help defeat hunger where you live.



Invite a health professional to visit your club and educate members on the prevalence and impact of hunger in your community.



Support your local food bank by donating time, equipment or food.



Use social media to raise awareness about hunger in your community and to inspire others to become involved.



Deliver nutritious, prepared meals to elderly, disabled or ill community members.



Serve meals at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.