

feedwire

SUMMER 2011



Leading the Charge to Relieve Hunger
for our Miami Valley Neighbors

An Interview with Burma Thomas

After serving 24 years as Chief Executive Officer of The Foodbank, Burma Thomas has announced her retirement.



Past Foodbank Board Member, Chuck Vella, recently had a chance to sit down with Burma to wish her well and ask her questions about her time with The Foodbank.

CV: When did you join The Foodbank?

BT: I came to The Foodbank in July 1987.

CV: What was your background before you joined The Foodbank?

BT: Well, I am originally from the east suburbs of Dayton, near Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. I went to Bowling Green University and the Kettering College of Medical Arts. I thought I was going to be an RN, but then decided against it. I started my social work career in 1971 as a caseworker for what was then called the “Welfare” Department. I was there 11 years. Before coming to The Foodbank, I worked at Miami Valley Hospital for five years in a unique service position focused on helping indigent and low income patients.

CV: What was The Foodbank’s situation when you arrived?

BT: The Foodbank was still finding its way in 1987. The Dayton Daily News Valley Food Relief campaign, TV 2 Food for Friends and Holiday Aid campaigns were all in place and were successful. Area churches and foundations were supportive. Food from government sources and Feeding America was a big part of the food service we provided. We had the big fire in January of 1988, just a few months after I joined The Foodbank. We lost all of the food, the equipment

and the warehouse. Fortunately, Dayton Power & Light came to our rescue, challenged the community to help us and propped us back on our feet very quickly. It was great! They housed us for four months and we never lost a day of service. We moved to the current facility in May 1988. At that time, we only had the back-half of the building. In 1993, we acquired the whole building. There have been a lot of changes that have helped us grow and to continue to provide services. I couldn’t begin to list all of the positive support and changes over the years.

CV: What are some milestones that you remember in your career with The Foodbank?

BT: One huge milestone was moving from the Red Cross to become an independent agency. That happened in July of 2004. It was the right time to depart. The Red Cross is a great organization with a broad set of priorities related to its mandatory services. At the time, The Foodbank was growing and needed to keep a single focus: help feed hungry people in our community.

I’ve had the opportunity to work with so many gifted and giving people through these years. The Foodbank has many dedicated supporters. We could not have been as successful in meeting the growing need for food relief had we not had such strong commitments from thousands of individuals, United Way, Montgomery County Family and Children First, The Dayton Foundation, DP&L and the Kettering Foundation. I could go on and on. We have support from virtually every charitable foundation and individual in this community, not to mention our big national partners such as Feeding America, Kroger, Sam’s Club, Walmart and Meijer.

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or visit our website at www.thefoodbankdayton.org

CV: Why do you think The Foodbank has remained so successful all of these years?

BT: A committed staff and strong community support: The Foodbank belongs to the community. We have a lot of stakeholders in this community and we have done a good job of providing services to the food relief network of programs. They are on the frontlines of providing food to people in need. We are accountable stewards of the support we receive to accomplish our mission. It is important to say, as well, that we have been and remain successful because we have stayed true to our mission. We have been mindful of how the duplication of services can not only strain an agency; it can also drain the resources of the community. Our mission is simple; relieve hunger through the acquisition and distribution of food to hungry people throughout the Miami Valley. That is who we are, that is what we've done and what we will continue to do.

**“The Foodbank
belongs to
the community”**

CV: Why The Foodbank?

BT: I come from a family with the strong Southern tradition of feeding people. When someone came through the door, they ate, whether they were hungry or not. I also had parents who taught me to have compassion for others and to be grateful for what I had. A desire to help those who are less fortunate made working for The Foodbank a perfect fit. It has been such a challenge and very rewarding for me all these years.

CV: What advice would you give to Michelle Riley, the incoming CEO?

BT: Michelle is the right person to move the mission forward. She has the all the skills and attributes necessary to do a wonderful job. I would encourage Michelle to continue the good work with the community and stay true to the mission.

CV: How do you intend on spending your retirement?

BT: Well, I would love to tell you that I will be relaxing on my porch, but my husband is a “doer” and he has a lot of work planned for us! I hope to have some time to let the inner artist in me come out. I don't know what my medium will be yet but I'm thinking metal sculpture!

The Foodbank staff and all Board Members who have served under Burma Thomas' leadership wish to extend their gratitude for her dedication, vision, and hard work helping people throughout our community who are in need. Burma has provided this community with invaluable service, leadership, and compassion that will live on perpetually at The Foodbank.

Visit our website at www.thefoodbankdayton.org to make a secure online gift in honor of Burma Thomas.

Yale Alumni Give Back at The Foodbank

The Foodbank welcomed a distinguished group of volunteers on May 17th and May 20th. For the third year, but for the first time in Dayton, the nationwide Yale Day of Service offered an opportunity for Yale alums to come together and give back to their communities in tangible ways. Across the country, Yale Clubs and other more informal groups, like the one in Dayton, organized service projects for May that helped others and strengthened their mutual ties. After sorting, inspecting, and repacking thousands of non-perishable food items, the group gathered in the warehouse for a fun photo with one of the (appropriately-named) lift trucks.



Pictured left to right: William Chick, Bob Fisher, Edman Gray, Celine O'Neill, Larry Hollar, Neal Gittleman, Bob Taft, and Ralph Bernstein

Upcoming Events

September is Hunger Action Month!

September 25 – CROP Hunger Walk at Island MetroPark

Log on to our website at www.thefoodbankdayton.org for details about these and more exciting events:



Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks Launches Statewide Hunger Relief Effort

Nothing campaign raises awareness and funds for hungry Ohioans

In partnership with Charter One Bank and the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks, The Foodbank is participating in a statewide campaign to raise awareness and funds that will be used to help feed our hungry friends and neighbors right here in Montgomery, Greene, and Preble counties. The Nothing Campaign enforces the cold tough fact that for thousands of people in our region, too often there's nothing to eat. 100% of the dollars raised in The Foodbank's service area will go to support our member agencies and the nearly 100 emergency feeding programs they operate.

Visit www.nothing.org/ohio to learn how you can help feed the growing number of hungry people in our area.



Ohio Senior Hunger Summit

The Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks (OASHF), in partnership with the 12 Feeding America food banks across the state, AARP-Ohio, Ohio Department of Aging, Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Ohio Association of Senior Centers, and the Corporation for National and Community Service, hosted the first Ohio Senior Summit at the Mid-Ohio Foodbank on June 21, 2011.

The goals of the summit were to raise awareness of the prevalence and consequences of hunger and malnutrition among Ohio's elderly, to highlight underutilized federal nutrition programs (SNAP), and best practices in partnership and collaboration that are already happening across the State.

Representatives from The Foodbank attended the summit along with more than 150 service providers, community stakeholders, businesses, foundations, and state and federal elected officials.

Attendees will reconvene in October to report on work accomplished over the next few months, highlight additional needs among older adults and their communities, and strategize how to meet those needs.

For more information about Ohio's Senior Hunger Summit please contact:

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OUR MISSION:
 The Foodbank is committed to relieving hunger through the acquisition and distribution of food to hungry people throughout the Miami Valley.

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MEET THE FOODBANK STAFF:

- Michelle L. Riley, Chief Executive Officer
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- Jon Michael Bogan, Warehouseman/Driver
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Agency Spotlight

Mount Olive Baptist Church Food Pantry

Founded in 1903, Mount Olive Baptist Church has been a viable fixture in the Edgemont neighborhood with a 108-year tradition of responding to the needs of the surrounding community. The Mount Olive Baptist Church Food Pantry was established by the late Pastor, D.W. McFarland, who was inspired to provide outreach to the community by feeding the hungry people in the neighborhood. He appointed Mrs. Willie B. Spear as the first supervisor of the food pantry. Mrs. Spear served in that capacity for several years and was president of the Montgomery County Hunger Coalition from 1989 to 1996. Several members of the church Usher Board were the first volunteers in the pantry. Mrs. Pauline Watson still volunteers at age 91. Rev. Dr. Carlton Williams, the current pastor of Mount Olive, encourages the church to extend its outreach to the community by providing food and additional social services.

569 hungry families were served by the Mount Olive food pantry from January through June of this year, a number that continues to grow.

Bottom row left to right: Edna Vick, Mary Wortham, Bernice Tripp, Cynthia Hayes
 Middle row left to right: Robin Stewart, Pauline Watson, Ruth Lewis, Nevora Parker, Dorothy Alexander
 Top row left to right: Robert Alexander, Charlie Williams, Walter Byrd, Lucius Williams



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