

Volunteer Organization Profile: Harvesters—The Community Food Network Topeka, KS

Volunteering in America 2011

Every day, millions of people across the country go hungry. Food is one of the most basic human needs, but many do not have access to it and may not know when or where they will find their next meal.

Volunteers at Harvesters—The Community Food Network help to feed 66,000 hungry people across northeastern Kansas every week. The organization provides food and household products to more than 620 nonprofit agencies, including kitchens, shelters, and food pantries. Volunteers work with Harvesters to pack family and senior food boxes, deliver food, and coordinate food drives.

Margie Burton, a lifelong volunteer, began working with Harvesters—The Community Food Network after discovering that the organization provided food for many of the other nonprofits she volunteered with in the area. At Harvesters, she helps out in a number of different ways, including filling and distributing food boxes for seniors, folding collection bags for postal workers to distribute in mailboxes, and packing backpacks with nutritious food for children on the weekends through the BackSnack program.

“Volunteering makes me more human and more aware that we are all part of a larger community,” Burton said. “When I see the children’s faces as they come to Harvesters with their families to pick up food, it reminds that there’s no reason why I should have so much and they should have so little. We are changing the lives of the people in this community.”

Founded in 1979, Harvesters—The Community Food Network was named Feeding America’s 2011 Food Bank of the Year. Last year, the organization distributed more than 38 million pounds of food to agencies within its network. In 2010, volunteers contributed more than 156,000 hours to the organization, the equivalent time of 75 full time employees.

“Our volunteers are so willing and ready to give their time to help those who go hungry in our community,” said Paula Pratt, Director of Community Outreach at Harvesters. “Volunteers make it possible for us to ensure that children, seniors, and others in the community have something nutritious to eat.”

Harvesters—The Community Food Network is a Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) grantee. AmeriCorps members have worked with the organization since 2006, supervising volunteer services, coordinating food drives, and training volunteers. This year, Harvesters is hosting 21 AmeriCorps members.

For more information on Harvesters Community Food Network, visit their website at www.harvesters.org; like them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/harvestersorg; or follow them on Twitter [@HarvestersORG](https://twitter.com/HarvestersORG).

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The Corporation for National and Community Service is a federal agency that engages more than five million Americans in service through its Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America programs, and leads President Obama's national call to service initiative, United We Serve. For more information, visit NationalService.gov.