I’m so grateful for that kids’ lunch program, oh boy!” says Sandra Gologergen from Savoonga, where many people are struggling for food. Warmer than usual weather on St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea has underscored conditions necessary for subsistence hunting. Sandra, who lives near the summer meals location, sees lots of excited kids going up to enjoy the meals. “We are so happy for them,” she says.

Savoonga is just one of 43 communities, most of them off the road system, where Food Bank of Alaska is sponsoring summer meals for children through the US Department of Agriculture Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The program helps to fill the meal gap for some of the nearly 60,000 children in Alaska who lose access during summer vacation to the free and reduced-price meals they receive during the school year.

To qualify for this program, summer meals need to meet USDA nutritional standards, but in Alaska they also need to be shelf-stable so they can withstand the lengthy shipping process by air to remote Alaska communities. Government funds fall well short of Food Bank of Alaska’s costs, so your donations make it possible for children across the state to play, learn and grow during the summer instead of worrying about having enough to eat.

Other Food Bank of Alaska programs to feed children are supported by grants from Hunger is, a collaboration by Cook Inlet Housing Authority. The programs continue to focus on securing strong Child Nutrition Reauthorization legislation governing federal programs to help kids. To join this campaign and others in support of policies to end hunger, email cdurr@foodbankofalaska.org.

Food Bank of Alaska and the Alaska Food Coalition, along with Senator Murkowski and Congressman Young, Hunger Is, a collaboration of store-bought food sources. Affected by changes in access to traditional food, many of Alaska’s communities are exploring new ways we can support the people of Alaska will join with Edythe in looking ahead to identify new ways we can support the people of St. Lawrence Island and other Alaska communities affected by changes in access to traditional food sources.

These shortages, along with the extremely high cost of store-bought food on the island, have forced many of St. Lawrence Island’s 1,500 residents to turn to food assistance programs to close the hunger gap. Food Bank of Alaska sends summer meals for kids and federal commodity food boxes to the island to help families struggling to put food on the table. Thanks to a grant from the State of Alaska, we were able to ship extra food this summer.

Food Bank of Alaska staff were able to tour in Kay and Gambell to hold community meetings and hear from village residents about both the food security challenges and opportunities for the future. Gambell resident Edythe Tunagay summed up community sentiments when she says, “I know it’s going to get harder and harder for us as the weather changes more and more, but we’re adaptable. We’ve been short on food the past three, four years. It’s hard on everybody,” says Clinton Beazhik.

“Now that I’ve driven the Alcan for the first time, I’m more convinced than ever that filling plates for Alaskans struggling with hunger is a unique challenge, given the enormous geography of this state that I am proud to call my home.”

I started in foodbanking 20 years ago at the Hawaii Foodbank before moving to Community Food Share in Boulder County, Colorado in 2000. I was initially attracted to foodbanking because I believed I could apply my business and accounting skills toward a worthy cause. Foodbanking and addressing hunger issues have now become my calling in life.

I believe it’s part of our human nature to help others, and it’s a fact of life that many of us will experience times when we need help as well. The generosity of others certainly helped me move along in my life, and, like many of you, that motivates me to share the abundance I’ve been blessed with, especially with those who are without the most basic need - access to enough nutritious food for a healthy, productive life.

I realize I need to learn about Alaska. I will need your help and your insights about how the Food Bank of Alaska can ensure no Alaskan goes hungry. Your commitment has sustained Food Bank of Alaska’s mission for 37 years, and I look forward to the opportunity to build on that success in the years ahead.

New Executive Director – Jim Baldwin
Called to the Unique Challenge of Alaska

The last few years have been difficult for people on St. Lawrence Island, located in the Bering Sea 40 air miles from Russia. They have been struggling with extremely low harvests of walrus, their traditional subsistence food. Gambell resident Virgil Sowakpuk explains, “These past few years, we are having a hard time submitting for our food because of the rapid climate change.” Unusually warm temperatures and unusual weather have pushed the sea ice further out, making it more difficult for hunters to harvest the animal they depend on for food as well as for energy and cash income. “We’ve been short on food the past three, four years. It’s hard on everybody,” says Clinton Beazhik.

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Mobile Food Pantry Helps Make Fresh Vegetables and Fruits More Than Just a ‘Special Event’ for Low Income Alaskans

Struggling families know fresh vegetables and fruit help them stay healthy, but 14 percent of recipients at Food Bank of Alaska’s Mobile Food Pantry say they never or almost never can afford to buy them. One mom told us, “My kids are 3, 5, and 7. I don’t want them to think that fresh food like fruits and veggies are a ‘special event’ which on my budget right now they can’t have.”

Your gifts to Food Bank of Alaska help us make healthy produce available. Last year we collected 1.4 million pounds of produce donated by local grocery stores, produce wholesalers, farmers and community members. A Human Services Community Matching Grant through the Municipality of Anchorage allowed us to buy another 205,000 pounds. “Since our goal is to get fresh produce out to people as quickly as possible, we usually load it onto a truck for the next scheduled Mobile Food Pantry,” says Operations Director Jason Lennaq. During a typical week, Food Bank of Alaska conducts few Mobile Food Pantries in different Anchorage neighborhoods.

You can help by donating surplus vegetables from your garden as part of our Plant A Row for the Hungry Food Drive. Just bring it in to Food Bank of Alaska, 2121 Spar Avenue, and we will get it out on the Mobile Food Pantry to an Anchorage neighborhood in need. You can also drop off produce at Alaska Mill and Feed. A Human Services Community Matching Grant through the Municipality of Anchorage allowed us to buy another 205,000 pounds.

Throughout the year, Food Bank of Alaska conducts a few Mobile Food Pantries in different Anchorage neighborhoods.

“I Don’t Have to Worry About My Grandkids Being Hungry”

Your support for Food Bank of Alaska makes a difference for Edna, a 73-year-old grandmother who struggles with food insecurity. Like many other grandparents these days, she also regularly helps out with her grandchildren and wants to make sure they don’t have to skip meals when they’re with her. As a result, Edna looks to piece together food assistance from several sources.

First is her monthly senior box through the US Department of Agriculture’s Commodities Supplemental Food Program. Each month, Food Bank of Alaska distributes about 1,400 of these boxes, filled with a nutritionally balanced selection of food designed to help seniors stay healthy. The box contains milk and cereal which she shares with the kids.

Second, Edna visits Food Bank of Alaska’s Mobile Food Pantry at Jewel Lake Church of the Nazarene where she can get fresh produce. “Fresh fruits and vegetables help me have healthier meals for the kids, and I don’t have to worry about them being hungry – that’s the best thing," she says.

Explain Edna, who has also been support from the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), “The $10 I receive in food stamps doesn’t buy much – if we didn’t have things like the Mobile Food Pantry and the senior boxes, I would be in trouble.”

How Valley Pigs Reduce Food Waste

Food Bank of Alaska believes that no good food should be wasted, especially when people do not have enough to eat. Our organization’s front motto in 1979 was this directive – “Taste and share. Don’t waste food.”

Still, every day Food Bank of Alaska receives food that is too old to use or spoiled. What then? This food goes into bins labeled “Pig Food,” says Glade, “It feeds anywhere up to 80-90 pigs, couple dozen cows and lord only knows how many chickens. It saves a lot of money for the farmer not having to buy so much grain, plus the food doesn’t end up in the dump and get wasted – it helps everybody out.”

In the US over 30 percent – 133 billion pounds – of the food supply available to retailers and consumers is wasted every year, according to the US Department of Agriculture and the EPA. Last year, these agencies announced the nation’s first food waste reduction goal – 50 percent by 2030.

Here’s how you can help cut waste –

1. Plan your meals and shop only what you need.
2. “Shop” your refrigerator first! Cook or eat what you already have before buying more.
3. Use leftovers.
4. Freeze leftovers.
5. Plan your menu before you go to the store and buy only the items on your menu.
6. Be careful when buying bulk – you’re paying more for the food you buy without the packaging.
7. Learn what product dates mean. Many of us throw out food that continues to be wholesome well past the date on the package. You can check online for information on your own products or in our refrigerator.

You’re AdvoCard Makes the Difference

For two decades, Alaska residents convicted of a drug-related felony were banned for life from receiving benefits through SNAP, the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly food stamps). This ban was put into place during the “war on drugs,” with the assumption that harsh punishments would deter people from committing crimes. Twenty years later these tough policies are not only considered largely ineffective, but also counterproductive to successful re-entry into law-abiding society. Denying basic resources like food leave formerly incarcerated people hungry and desperate, a combination that makes re-offending far more likely and post-prison recovery much harder.

Until this year Alaska was one of only six states to still have the full ban in place. Thanks to your persistent advocacy and the work of the anti-hunger network in Alaska, this ban was officially lifted this summer through Senate Bill 91, the criminal justice reform bill. We are thrilled to see this enacted and urge policymakers and others to continue working to make such reforms a priority.

Advocacy is a critical tool in the fight to end hunger, and we need your help working for policies that protect and increase food security for Alaskans struggling with hunger. To join in these efforts, sign up at www.foodbankofalaska.org/ways-to-give/advocate.