



## **MEDIA CONTACTS**

**Kaylie Moore**

Journalist

724-317-6924, [kmoore@fayettecountypa.info](mailto:kmoore@fayettecountypa.info)

**Kristi Rooker Kassimer**

Public Relations, Digital Media Specialist

412-691-0262, [kkassimer@fayettecountypa.info](mailto:kkassimer@fayettecountypa.info)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **FAYETTE CHAMBER, FOOD BANK AID COUNTY THROUGH PARTNERSHIP**

**Uniontown, PA** - As the Easter holiday approaches, the Fayette Chamber of Commerce continues to support the Fayette County Food Bank's mission to aid county families.

Every spring and fall, volunteer chamber members host the Fayette Chamber Cares food drives to collect non-perishable food items and monetary donations for the food bank. Monetary donations are used to purchase hams for Easter in the spring and turkeys for Thanksgiving or Christmas in the fall.

Operated by the Fayette County Community Action Agency, the Fayette County Food Bank is the primary hub for the collection and distribution of food, supplying 49 food pantries countywide.

Last week, the chamber purchased and delivered 200 hams to the food bank for distribution.

"The Fayette Chamber is made of businesses who understand that there are people in need in the county," said chamber Executive Director Muriel Nuttall. "Many years ago, in response to critical need for food at the Fayette County Food Bank, one of our members stood up and took the lead in bringing our businesses together to feed our neighbors in need."

Food drive chairman and chamber board member Chris Kennedy founded the initiative more than a decade ago. The most recent drive was held at WalMart in Uniontown.

Kennedy said chamber members, along with volunteers from the Fayette Young Professionals Network, turn the drives into community events, featuring raffles and concession stands, with all proceeds benefiting the food bank.

"Last week, we collected approximately 500 pounds worth of non-perishables and about \$500 in cash," Kennedy said. "Last fall, we were able to purchase 300 turkeys and donate over 1,000 pounds in non-perishables."

Not including this year, the biannual drive has garnered over 25,000 pounds of food and 30,000 pounds of hams and turkeys.



Kennedy said he was inspired to start the initiative after seeing a news broadcast stating that one in five children in the United States goes to bed hungry every night.

"I thought that was just outrageous for the U.S. That statistic is now one in seven, so it's improved a little bit, but it's still an outrageous number," Kennedy said. "I've been very fortunate that I've never had to go without, always knowing where my next meal was coming from. This is just something that I thought would be a good idea for those who aren't as fortunate."

Kennedy said he's happy knowing local families' holidays may be a little brighter thanks to the efforts of both the chamber and countless citizens who donate to the cause.

"It just makes you feel good that there are people willing to donate their time and make donations for our neighbors in Fayette County that are in need," he said. "Because we live local, it's very important to me that 100 percent of everything we collect stays in the county."

Community Action team planner Keeley Forrestel said the food bank distributes about 1.8 million tons of food to more than 10,000 county residents annually.

Forrestel said the chamber's efforts have a big impact on families who don't have regular access to food.

"A lot of times our families will go without, especially for a holiday," she said. "We are really dependent on agencies, organizations and businesses to provide those larger items like hams or turkey."

In addition to combating hunger, donations also help families celebrate traditions, Forrestel added.

"It's not just about increasing access to healthy foods but also about celebrating traditions," she said. "A big component is maintaining the family connection and communication by coming together and sharing meals as a family."

"These things that will help strengthen those relationships will result in better outcomes and futures for our families overall."

Forrestel said the Fayette Chamber helps reinforce that message while supporting the food bank's collection efforts.

"It's about how we can improve the whole community and make a bigger change than I think we realize," she said.

"It's important to work together, business to business, business to community and community to business," Nuttall said. "That's what keeps our community strong."

The Fayette County Community Food Bank is located at 108 North Beeson Ave. in Uniontown. For more information or to make a donation, visit [www.fccea.org](http://www.fccea.org) or call Forrestel at 724-437-6050, ext. 4306.



The Fayette Chamber of Commerce is located at 65 West Main St. in Uniontown. For more information on upcoming food drives, call 724-437-4571 or email [info@fayettechamber.com](mailto:info@fayettechamber.com).

To learn more about Fayette County, visit [www.fayettecountypa.info](http://www.fayettecountypa.info).

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