

COMMENTARY

# Every meal matters to those who are struggling

By **Tina Osso**  
Shared Harvest Foodbank



Shared Harvest Food Bank Executive Director Tina Osso

It is a time to count blessings, whether you celebrate any kind of holiday or not. This year has been a particularly hard one. As the economy slowly recovers, many families are still struggling and feel all but forgotten. Some wonder why we even try. They say that hunger and poverty were here before we were born, and these problems will be here long after we are gone. They are right, you know.

It's like Sisyphus who, according to the Greek myth, was punished for all eternity to roll a rock up a mountain only to have it roll back down to the bottom when he reaches the top, an apparently hopeless situation. Some feel like we face a hopeless situation because we aren't ending hunger – what's the point if you are

never finished?

But I look at it from a different point of view. Sisyphus pushed that rock up the mountain over and over again, true, but each time he had to see things along the way that he had not seen before. Everything changes, even if your mission doesn't: what you do, how you do it and who comes along to help. Each experience is unique.

And the thing that is most inspiring to me is that Sisyphus was stronger than the rock, the mountain and the hopeless situation combined. He kept his head down and just kept pushing, knowing there was no hope of success – if you define success as the

rock staying at the top of the mountain. I think Sisyphus defined success as the work.

It is the work that we do everyday, the people who help us, and the people who need us that keep our momentum up. It is their stories of struggle, the hopelessness of hunger and poverty that keep us pushing that rock up the mountain. It is the diversity of hands on that rock that maintains its mobility, regardless of how many times it rolls back down.

It is our network of dedicated caring individuals at food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters who roll their sleeves up every day and set about the real work of feeding people in need – knowing that rock of hunger will just roll back down the mountain of poverty and tomorrow they will have to do it all again.

It is the dedicated volunteers who, each week, are

packing more than 3,500 backpacks with food for hungry children to eat over the weekends, and the volunteers who deliver the food to the schools each week. It is the hands that assemble over 1,600 boxes of food for senior citizens each month.

It is the caring people at the Journal-News, now in its 14th year of the Community Food Relief campaign, who help us strain against that rock, lending hope to a hopeless situation – and the means to make a difference.

So how do you move a mountain? One rock at a time. We may not be solving the bigger problems of hunger, but to a hungry person it is the next meal that solves the hunger they feel right now. **N**

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