

CORONAVIRUS: THE LATEST

Shared Harvest plans to aid families Saturday

By Michael D. Pitman
Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD – Shared Harvest Foodbank is expected to serve 2,000 families on Saturday at Fairfield High School, which will be five times as many as any single distribution in Butler County in its history.

The demand on the food bank, which serves five southwest Ohio counties, has increased since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19. On March 23, 10 Ohio National Guard members were assigned to assist Shared Harvest with packing emergency food boxes.

Since mid-March, a record amount of food has been distributed as more people

HOW TO GO

What: Shared Harvest Foodbank distribution

When: 10 a.m. to noon Saturday

Where: Fairfield High School, 8800 Holden Blvd.

More info: 2,000 families will be served with 100 pounds of food, including a 42-pound box with shelf-stable emergency food. This will be a no-contact distribution where no identification, proof of residency or signatures will be required.

are out of work due to businesses reducing hours or laying off employees, said Shared Harvest Executive Director Terry Perdue.

“Over the past two weeks, we have seen a 300% increase in the number of people turning to our network for help,” he said.

Last Saturday, a drive-through food distribution in Piqua planned for 1,015 families to receive emergency food boxes, but officials had to turn away more than three dozen families. Previously, the largest number of families ever served in Piqua was 301 in February.

Butler County’s largest drive-through distribution was 408 families, also this past February. From 10 a.m.

to noon Saturday, they’re planning to serve 2,000 families at Fairfield High School, 8800 Holden Blvd.

Shared Harvest has about 60 Ohio National Guard and Army Reserve members assisting in distribution with 20 foodbank staff and volunteers.

“People who have never had to turn to our network are showing up in these distribution lines,” Perdue said. “They are grateful for the anonymity of being able to stay in their car and not having to visit a food pantry where they would be concerned about the stigma of having to ask for help.”

Many are picking up food for family members, such as senior parents, who can’t leave their homes, Perdue

said.

Perdue said April’s monthly mass distribution in Butler County, which is usually held at its Ohio 4 location, is being moved because of traffic concerns.

Fairfield City Schools spokeswoman Gina Gentry-Fletcher said the district is “grateful” to the food bank to help their community.

“Shared Harvest has fulfilled many food needs for struggling families in our community,” she said. “Food insecurity during this time of uncertainty should not be a concern for our families.”

The food bank has provided food for the high school’s National Honor Society to help stock its student-run pantry.

Each family will receive

approximately 100 pounds of food per household totaling nearly 200,000 pounds of food distributed, Perdue said.

Each family will receive a 42-pound box of shelf-stable emergency food designed to feed a family of four for five days, and a bag of frozen meat and produce, like apples or oranges.

This will be a no-contact distribution, and to serve as many as possible in two hours, Shared Harvest is waiving usual requirements, such as identification verification, residency and the need for signatures.

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