

## 25 years of FoodStock

As we are planning our 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Clarion County Community Bank FoodStock, let us look back over the last 25 years of helping our local foodbanks. FoodStock was started by an ambitious group of Clarion Area Chamber, Keystone Smiles/AmeriCorps and community members. The goal of the first FoodStock was to break the Guinness Book of World Records record for collecting the largest number of non-perishable food items in a 24 hour period. With a Semi truck parked on Main Street during the Farmer's and Crafter's Day of Autumn Leaf Festival and many volunteers bringing in food and counting food, the Guinness Book Record was successfully broken, and Clarion held the new record! But most importantly, our local foodbanks were stocked with food.

The first FoodStock event was such a success that it has become an annual event during the month of September. The Clarion County commissioners have declared September FoodStock month for many years. Clarion University groups, local Scouting groups, Clarion HS National Honor Society, and many others have volunteered to distribute bags to community houses and pick them up. Local business graciously put "barrels" in their facilities for donation collections and these are brought to a central location on the Tuesday morning of Allegheny Toyota Autumn Leaf Festival™ for counting and sorting. Our location has been in different locations such as the Clarion Mall and for the last few years at Clarion Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram. We are thankful for these business hosting FoodStock, as they also help with collections, sorting, boxing and distribution of the food.

Clarion County Community Bank FoodStock food distribution typically happens on the Tuesday after Allegheny Toyota Autumn Leaf Festival™. The number of foodbanks has increased over the years. We currently distribute to 13 Clarion County Community Foodbanks. These foodbanks span Clarion County and are always very appreciative of the donations. Community employees and volunteers drive in and pick up their boxes of food which helps stock their foodbanks. With the monetary donations FoodStock receives from local businesses and community groups, we purchase turkeys and hams for holiday distribution and sometimes food to add to our collection. This depends on the need on that particular year.

The local need for food seems to always be increasing and the foodbanks try to keep up with the needs of the community. It is very important that we keep the Clarion County Community Bank FoodStock program running and prospering. To do this, we need community volunteers to help collect, sort and pack food and our community to keep giving non-perishable, non-expired food items for us to distribute to all 13 foodbanks.

As we get closer to September and start looking forward to the Allegheny Toyota Autumn Leaf Festival™, I ask you to be generous in your donations to the Clarion County Community Banks 26<sup>th</sup> Annual FoodStock. There will be blue bins around the community to put donations in and some of our communities will have front door pick up by volunteers. Look for the orange bags. If you are unsure where to donate, you can always stop in at a Clarion County Community Bank branch, Clarion Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram or the Clarion Area Chamber of Business and Industry and leave a food or monetary donation.

I would like to give a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has volunteered, sponsored, and donated to FoodStock over the past 25 years. Let's make our 26<sup>th</sup> year one to remember!

Jennifer Keth  
Clarion County Community Bank FoodStock Chairperson