

heating costs make it difficult for everyone to make ends meet in the winter months. We saw an opportunity with the Epic Buffet to be able to give a hand up to those in need with a steady, solid donation of unused food to people who need it the most. So every week, we end up donating about 100 pounds of unused food, and we rotate those donations between the Bangor Area Homeless Shelter and Manna. For us, it just makes sense. But something that 'just makes sense' for a business or organization can really make a big difference for hard working Maine families."

Hannaford Supermarkets, based in Scarborough, operates over 180 stores and employs more than 27,000 associates in Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont, and is another example of a big business making a difference.

Each Hannaford store and distribution center contributes rescued food — products that may be approaching their freshness date or have cosmetic damage — to local pantries, meals programs and Good Shepherd Food Bank.

"Last year, we donated 11.6 million pounds of rescued food to hunger relief in Maine, including 1 million pounds of meat and 3 million pounds of fresh fruit and vegetables," said Eric Blom, Hannaford's external communications manager. "Hannaford has been working with regional food banks and pantries to further improve systems for recovering harder-to-handle fresh items, making sure that there can be regular pickups and ensuring they have the processes and equipment to handle that food safely. As part of that work, we have donated or helped pantries and food banks to purchase vans,

refrigerated truck trailers, refrigeration units and other equipment."

In addition, the supermarket chain partners with customers to raise funds and food donations through programs such as its Fight Hunger shopping bag where 25-cents for each bag purchased is donated to Good Shepherd, and its annual Hannaford Helps Fight Hunger campaign. They also sponsor Cooking Matters, a statewide program that helps teach low-

income people how to shop and cook nutritious meals on a budget, and they support school-based food pantries and food backpack programs in a number of Maine public schools, bridging nutrition gaps that inhibit learning.

Each of these programs is helping to decrease the state's level of food insecurity, which heightened nationwide in 2008 during the recession and remains high in Maine despite some economic upturn.

"We think it has to do with some of the erosion and weakening of different safety net programs, such as a reduction

in housing and fuel and food assistance programs," Michael said. "I think we were less resilient with the great recession once it hit."

But there is hope.

"We are seeing a convergence of policymakers, thought leaders and organizations to address the issue," Michael said. "Fifteen years ago, for most public health professionals, it would have largely been off the radar [and was] understood maybe as a social problem but less as a health problem. We're beginning to build the bridges between different sectors ... to make sure that our communities have access to healthy food."

**"One of the most important things we can do in life is to help each other out. Maine is a cold state and sometimes things like heating costs make it difficult for everyone to make ends meet in the winter months. We saw an opportunity with the Epic Buffet to be able to give a hand up to those in need with a steady, solid donation of unused food to people who need it the most."**

*— Jose Flores, Hollywood Casino General Manager*



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Our thanks to **Good Shepherd Food Bank** for working to end hunger in our community and throughout Maine




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