



EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

By [Emily Henry](#) | [Email the author](#) | September 21, 2012

[Opinion](#), [Local Connections](#), [Awareness](#)

Meet the New Neighbor: Hunger

An increasing number of families in Concord are experiencing poverty, relying on food stamps and food banks to fill empty stomachs. Is it time to start feeding the neighbors?

PHOTOS (7)



I've been visiting with a number non-profit organizations this week as part of my goal to shed more light on all the incredible volunteer and non-profit work happening in Concord. These stories will be featured fortnightly as part of the [Non-Profits at Work](#) series on Concord Patch.

On Thursday, I was invited over to the [Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano](#) to take a tour of the warehouse and learn more about how the organization helps feed 132,000 people a month. It was amazing to see all that food stacked ceiling-high, being whisked around on forklifts or sorted into boxes headed for one of the 180 agencies serving the hungry in Contra Costa and Solano counties.

But what was even more amazing was the insight into just how prevalent a problem hunger is — not just nationally, or statewide, but right here in Concord. And it's getting worse. [More and more Concordians are slipping below the poverty line](#), and between 2010 and 2011, the number of households in Concord receiving food stamps increased by 48 percent to 3,354.

That's about one in every 12 homes in Concord, which means that two or three families on my street could be going through tough times and not have enough to eat.

I wondered... if my neighbor knocked on my door and said, "Emily, I'm sorry to bother you but my family and I are having a hard time putting food on the table. Could you spare a can of tuna? Or a few bucks?" — what would I do? I'd like to think, of course, that I'd raid the pantry. Maybe I'd bake a pie and take it over. The next time I went grocery shopping, I'd fill a few bags for the neighbors.

But most people wouldn't come and knock on the door. They wouldn't broadcast their misfortunes to the neighborhood. Instead, they'd go to a food bank or community kitchen to get help.

This month is [Hunger Action Month](#), a time when food banks across the nation try to raise awareness about hunger — not as a hazy issue in the distance, but as the problem living next door.

If you'd like to help feed the neighbors, Lisa Sherrill from the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano [explains how in her recent blog post](#). You can also do the following:

- **[Donate cash to the food bank through the website](#)**. Because the food bank buys goods in bulk, your money goes further than at the grocery store. Every dollar buys two meals.
- **Empty the pantry or pick up a few extra items at the store to donate**. Put goods in one of the food bank canisters found by the doors at grocery stores like Safeway. Right now, the food bank especially needs canned tuna, canned vegetables, and canned or dried beans, rice and lentils.

Are you participating in Hunger Action Month? How? Would you like to? Comment below and get a free t-shirt from the food bank! Email your size preference (small, medium, large or extra-large) to Emily.Henry@Patch.com.

About this column: Straight from the scribbled pages of the Concord Patch editor's mental notebook. **Related Topics:** [Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano](#), [Food Banks](#), [Hunger](#), and [Hunger Action Month](#)