



Black Hawk County, Cedar Falls, and Waterloo Launch Community Challenge for the Northeast Iowa Food Bank

Local governments commit \$100,000 and call on businesses, organizations, foundations, and residents to join them in fighting food insecurity.

WATERLOO, Iowa (November 18, 2025) — The Northeast Iowa Food Bank (NEIFB) is announcing a united Community Challenge led by the Black Hawk County Board of Supervisors, the City of Cedar Falls, and the City of Waterloo in response to an urgent rise in food insecurity in Black Hawk County.

Together, Waterloo, Cedar Falls and Black Hawk County have committed \$100,000 to support the Northeast Iowa Food Bank and are challenging the community to step up and help families facing food insecurity. Businesses, foundations, civic organizations, nonprofits, faith communities and individual residents are encouraged to join the challenge.

"Even though the shutdown has ended, the need remains," said Barbara Prather, Executive Director of the Northeast Iowa Food Bank. "Right now, we are seeing higher demand at the same time we are facing shortages of both food and funding. This Community Challenge shows what is possible when local leaders stand together and take action. Their \$100,000 commitment is powerful, and we are asking those who are able across Black Hawk County to join them so families do not have to choose between paying their bills and buying food."

Food insecurity in Black Hawk County has reached an urgent level. More than 17,000 people in the county face food insecurity, including 1 in 5 children. Across Black Hawk County, food pantries are seeing sharp increases in demand. Black Hawk County pantries served 63-percent more households in the second week of November than in the second week of October. Even more concerning, they served

180-percent more new households during that same time, a clear sign that families who were once stable are now in crisis.

This surge is tied directly to the disruption of federal SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, benefits during the recent government shutdown. In Black Hawk County alone, 7,500 households rely on SNAP, representing nearly \$4 million in economic impact that helps families put food on the table and supports local businesses.

While SNAP remains the nation's most effective hunger safety net, food banks cannot replace it. For every 1 meal provided by food pantries, SNAP provides 9. When SNAP is disrupted, local food assistance systems are left carrying an almost impossible burden.

Leaders Call the Community to Action

Mayor Quentin Hart, City of Waterloo

"In Waterloo, we believe that no child, no senior, and no family should ever go hungry. This challenge is more than a call for donations; it's a call for unity. When our neighbors are hurting, we step up. Waterloo is proud to stand with Cedar Falls, Black Hawk County, and the Northeast Iowa Food Bank to make sure every family has the support, stability, and dignity they deserve."

Mayor Danny Laudick, City of Cedar Falls

"One of the most Iowan things we can do is look out for our neighbors. Standing alongside our sister city and county, I'm proud to see us partner with the Northeast Iowa Food Bank to fund this community challenge. My thanks go out to all of our residents who make this funding possible, and to everyone who gives in big ways and small – whether through donations of time, food, or funds. Every contribution matters."

Tavis Hall, Chair, Black Hawk County Board of Supervisors

"The unanimous action taken by Waterloo, Cedar Falls, and Black Hawk County stands as a powerful example of what happens when local governments set aside boundaries and come together for the good of all people in Black Hawk County. By launching this Community Challenge, we are not only contributing resources—we are issuing a collective call to action to our corporate partners, community organizations, and residents to join us in meeting this need head-on. When local

government leads with unity and purpose, it invites the entire community to step forward in solidarity. Together, we can make sure that hunger is met with compassion, collaboration, and a collective commitment to ensuring every family in Black Hawk County has what they need to live with dignity.”

How to Participate

Visit neifb.org to make an online donation or mail donations to:

Northeast Iowa Food Bank

1605 Lafayette Street

Waterloo, IA 50703

Please note “Community Challenge” in the designation, if possible.

Together, the Cedar Valley can help ensure every family in Black Hawk County has access to the food they need to survive, and the dignity they deserve to thrive.

“This is a moment for the Cedar Valley to stand together, a moment for leadership, compassion and action,” Prather said. “We are so grateful to live in a community where local leaders reflect these values and step forward in tangible ways. We Champion People, and we are asking our community to do the same by matching this incredible commitment.”

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About NEIFB: The Northeast Iowa Food Bank (NEIFB) is a proud member of Feeding America® and the Iowa Food Bank Association. NEIFB distributes nutritious food and grocery products to over 140 nonprofit organizations and programs that help families and individuals facing food insecurity. Last year, the Food Bank distributed over 8.4 million meals within its 16-county service area. For over 40 years, the Food Bank has alleviated hunger and provided nutrition education through its eight programs: Agency Distribution, Backpack, Cedar Valley Food Pantry, Kids Café, Mobile Food Pantry, School Market, Senior Nutrition, and Summer Feeding. To learn more, visit neifb.org and follow us on social media.